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Volume 10

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# Welcome to **ADVANCED PHOTOSHOP<sup>®</sup> PREMIUM COLLECTION**

In today's world of digital artistry, Adobe Photoshop is an indispensable asset and it is vital to stay ahead by developing skills and techniques. With that in mind, this book compiles the best content from the last 12 months of Advanced Photoshop magazine, consisting of in-depth features and top tutorials to help you develop expert Photoshop skills. With sections covering photomanipulation, 3D & Photoshop, digital painting, photo editing, and graphics & web, all the essential techniques are tackled. Follow the guidance of experts and creative industry professionals, who have drawn on a wealth of knowledge to bring you in-depth example projects incorporating a wide range of tricks, secrets and shortcuts. Additionally, this book comes supplied with free online resources packed with asset files to use alongside many of the tutorials, plus free fonts, brushes and textures, worth over £180/\$276 in total. Enjoy the book!





# ADVANCED PHOTOSHOP® PREMIUM COLLECTION

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# A PROFESSIONAL GUIDE TO SELECTIONS

OUR PHOTOSHOP EXPERTS TAKE A LOOK AT HOW THEY USE PHOTOSHOP'S POWERFUL SELECTION TOOLS TO ACHIEVE PIXEL-PERFECT RESULTS

**S**electing part of an image may seem to a beginner like one of Photoshop's most basic functions, but as any seasoned user will tell you, it's actually one of the most complex.

There's really no shortage of ways to select items in an image using Photoshop. You can go from simple geometric selections using the Rectangular Marquee tool or Elliptical Marquee tool; to freehand selections with the Lasso, Polygonal Lasso or Magnetic Lasso tool; to selecting areas of similar colour or brightness

with the Magic Wand or Color Range command. You can even paint a selection manually with a brush in Quick Mask mode or head in to make pixel-perfect selections using the Pen tool.

Even that paragraph only scratches the surface of what is possible with the selection tools. There are many ways indeed to experiment with the options on offer, with artists all over the world utilising them in thousands of different ways.

Whether you're a retoucher, a graphic designer, a digital artist or a photo editor,

selections will be a core component of your workflow. That's why we've turned the spotlight on them here, asking a range of top Photoshop artists how they use them in their work to achieve a number of goals.

Throughout this feature you'll gain insight into how Photoshop's selection tools are used in a professional environment, and how they can help to achieve stunning results while also improving overall productivity. So read on and discover how using selections correctly can completely transform your workflow.

© Icon Advertising & Design

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## PERFECT FUR SELECTION WITH REFINE EDGE

STUDIO314'S BJÖRN EWERS DISCUSSES HIS FAVOURITE TOOLS FOR THE JOB

### 01 | ROUGH SELECTION

In order to cut out a very hairy or furry animal, I normally use the Polygonal Lasso tool. I try to include all the curls but I leave out all the individual long hairs. I find it easier to paint these hairs back in afterwards.

### 02 | REFINE EDGES

To fine-tune the selection I use the Refine Edge tool. If there are particularly long hairs I use a large selection radius with a range of 120px or bigger. I then fine-tune everything by carefully moving the edges and contrast. I paint over several parts until the selection fits correctly.

### 03 | DODGE AND BURN ON THE ALPHA MASK

Finally, I work on the alpha mask with the Dodge and Burn tool. With the Burn tool I darken the almost black parts, and with the Dodge tool I try to bring back some of the overly transparent hairs. The perfect selection is complete!



Illustrator and art director Thomas Burden prefers to keep things simple when cutting out, refraining from getting overly technical with his selections. "95 per cent of my work is created in CINEMA 4D and rendered as TIFFs that I then edit in Photoshop," he tells us of his work. "To save time cutting out, I always use alpha channels/object buffers when rendering out of C4D, so I can click on a specific element in the Photoshop Channels menu to select it.

"One trick I always use when editing my work in Photoshop is holding the Cmd/Ctrl key and clicking on an element's image in the Layers panel to select it," explains Burden. "I'll then use that as a layer mask and apply any cutaways or

erasing to the mask rather than the layer itself to preserve editability."

As with most Photoshop users, when it comes to creating selections with pixel-perfect precision, Burden believes that the Pen tool is the best way to go. "When cutting out anything remotely detailed in Photoshop, I'll always use the Pen tool and then use Cmd/Ctrl-click>Make Selection. I prefer this to using the Lasso tools. I also use the options found under Select>Modify quite a lot. I'm forever Cmd/Ctrl-clicking when using the Lasso or Marquee tools to bring up the Feather or Refine Edge functions. These can really help to get the perfect selection that you're looking for."



### USE THE PEN TOOL TO SELECT SHAPES

CAR DESIGNER DANIEL HAHN REVEALS HOW YOU CAN CREATE SELECTIONS USING SHAPES AND LAYERS

#### 01 | USE THE PEN TOOL

I usually start with a quick sketch and outline the painted cover-pieces of the robot with the Pen tool. I set the layer Opacity to 50% to help me see what I am selecting. In this example I have seven separate, simple shapes on different layers.



#### 02 | SELECT THE SHAPE LAYERS

Cmd/Ctrl-click on the layer thumbnail of the first shape to get a selection from it. Next, hold Cmd/Ctrl+Shift and start clicking on all the other shape layer thumbnails. You will have a combined selection of all the shapes drawn earlier.



#### 03 | MAKE A LAYER MASK

Create a new layer and press the Make Layer Mask button on the bottom of the layer window. You will end up with a mask where you can draw in an exact boundary. You can now also Cmd/Ctrl-click on the black and white mask thumbnail to get that selection back. I usually do that later on in the process to put textures like scratches or dirt on the robot parts.



### MASTER CHANNELS

THOMAS BURDEN REVEALS HOW PRE-MADE CHANNELS CAN MAKE SOME SELECTIONS A BREEZE



#### 01 | USING PRE-MADE CHANNELS

Download this feature's file at <http://bit.ly/1wXDuVL>. Open 'neon.psd' in Photoshop. In the Channels menu, Cmd/Ctrl-click on the 'neon' channel thumbnail to select just the neon elements.



#### 02 | CONTRACT THE SELECTION

Go to Select>Modify>Contract and enter 6 pixels in the 'Contract By' box.



#### 03 | USE FEATHER

With the Marquee (M) or Lasso (L) tool selected, Cmd/Ctrl-click anywhere on the art board and select Feather. Set this to 4 pixels and hit Return. Now copy and paste the selection on top and set the layer blending mode to Screen. Repeat as necessary, using blurs to create a suitable highlight.



## TRANSFORM 3D ART

THOMAS BURDEN ILLUSTRATES HOW HE USES SELECTIONS TO TOUCH UP HIS 3D IMAGES

© Thomas Burden



All elements were rendered out of CINEMA 4D under one object buffer to separate it from the background. I Cmd/Ctrl-clicked on the channel in the Photoshop Channels panel to select it, and then copy and pasted it so that it could be edited separately from the background.

Here I used the Polygonal Lasso tool to select the areas in between the cymbals. A selection as a Photoshop brush was then used as a layer mask on the lightning.

The Pen tool was used to cut out the shape around the foreground elements. A selection as a Photoshop brush was then used as a layer mask on the steam.

### ■ QUICK TIP

By Cmd/Ctrl-clicking on layers, you can add or subtract selections from each other. If you Cmd/Ctrl-click on the thumbnail image and then push Shift and click on the next thumbnail, you get a combined selection of these layers. The same works with Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt-click to subtract the second selection from the first. It's a kind of Boolean-function for selections. Cmd/Ctrl+Shift-click will add a selection, while Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt-click will subtract a selection.

These vinyl shapes were cut out using the Pen tool and then duplicated by clicking and dragging while holding the Opt/Alt key.



## CREATE SEAMLESS COMPS

AJITH PRAN, SENIOR GRAPHIC ARTIST AND

RETOUCHER AT THE DUBAI-BASED ADVERTISING COMPANY ICON, BELIEVES THAT SELECTIONS MUST ALWAYS BE APPROACHED WITH AN OPEN MIND

"Selection is always a challenge: there are many techniques and tools for selection, and each varies according to the image and subject for selection," he explains. "Selections unlock some of the most powerful features of Photoshop, including the ability to apply targeted adjustments with exceptional accuracy and to produce creative composite images. In my opinion a great composition is when all elements blend together seamlessly. The key to achieving this is selections.

"If you want a perfect selection, then even from the earliest days of Photoshop the Pen tool has been the go-to tool of choice, because it offers the accuracy to select and re-edit selections for further fine-tuning," continues Pran. "The Pen tool is particularly handy when used in tandem with a Wacom tablet.

"Apart from the Pen tool, layer masking is also a solid option that allows users to paint pixel to pixel to precisely select what they want."

## THREE ESSENTIAL PLUG-INS

USE ONE OF THESE APPLICATIONS TO CREATE PERFECT SELECTIONS

### Fluid Mask 3

Masking is a delicate art, and while recent versions of Photoshop have massively improved this side of the software, there remain plug-ins that can help you get even cleaner and more accurate masks. Fluid Mask 3 is one such plug-in, making even arduous tasks such as cutting around hair a much simpler process. It's currently priced at approx £87/\$149.



### Contrast Mask

Contrast Mask is another free plug-in that uses a contrast mask to reduce the overall contrast of an image. It does so by creating a black and white negative of an image, blurring it to avoid hard edges, and then overlaying it with the original. This helps to darken the highlights and lighten the shadows.



### Wire Worm

If you find yourself often removing wires, fences or other similar obstructions from your images, then Wire Worm is the plug-in for you. It automates the process of removing such elements from an image in a simple and easy-to-use manner. Best of all, it's free, and you can't argue with that!



## THE FINE ART OF SELECTIONS

STUDIO314'S BJÖRN EWERS DISCUSSES THE TOOLS HE USED TO CREATE A PERFECTLY ACCURATE SELECTION FOR THIS EYE-CATCHING IMAGE

I needed to make a selection of the orange socks. They are fluorescent and needed extra curves. After a rough selection, I fine-tuned it using the Refine Edge tool. This tool helped to select the woolly hairs that are sticking out.

The hair of the model was selected and readjusted using the Refine Edge tool and copied on an extra layer. I then blended it into the blue background.

To create the reddish illuminated circle in the background, I took a colour layer and masked it with a circle selection on the layer mask. I then blurred it using the layer mask adjustments.

I made an extra selection of the shadow to match it with the blue colour of the background. I put it on an extra layer and multiplied it with blurred edges.

Model: Lena Fishman/m4Models © studio314.de

## ADD A DEPTH OF FIELD BLUR

DANIEL HAHN ILLUSTRATES HOW SELECTIONS CAN BE USED FOR MORE THAN JUST CUTTING OUT A GROUP OF PIXELS

### 001 | USING DEPTH OF FIELD

In close-up shots of my characters I usually create some areas in focus and some out of focus. This creates a similar result to shooting a portrait shot with a real camera. The way I approach this leaves me in control of where I want the blur to be exactly, so I can show or hide the areas I wish.

### 002 | USE THE LASSO TOOL

To create depth of field using selections, open an image and Ctrl/right-click on the Selection tool in the toolbar. Choose the Lasso tool and draw a rough selection around the area that you want to be in focus, but be sure to make it smaller than you want the final effect to be.

### 003 | CREATE THE BLUR

Press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection. Next, press Cmd/Ctrl+J to copy that area of the image onto a new layer above. After this go to Filters>Blur>Gaussian Blur and choose how much you want to blur the selected areas of the image. Now you can take the Eraser tool with an airbrush tip and simply brush-erase out the areas that should stay in focus.



## MIMIC MOVEMENT

ICON ADVERTISING'S AJITH PRAN REVEALS HOW SELECTIONS CAN ADD DYNAMISM AND A SENSE OF ENERGY TO EVEN THE MOST STATIC OF IMAGES

"This visual was created for an advertising campaign for one of Dubai's leading sports magazines. Titled 'Adrenaline Rush' by Icon Advertising, the visual was conceptualised by Firas. O. Tiirhi, creative and managing director at Icon Advertising, with the objective being to dramatise a visually stunning representation of the rush experienced behind the wheel of a Formula 1 car.

"We used the Pen tool for most of the selections in this visual. I prefer using the Pen tool for a perfect cut-out. The car itself was selected using the Pen tool as it offers more flexibility in editing the path and making a perfect selection. The other elements were selected using the Pen tool in combination with the Quick Selection tool and by using the Color Range. For grading we used Channel Mixer and Color Balance."



Daniel Hahn currently works as a vehicle designer at BMW Designworks USA, where he not only creates designs for the BMW brand, but also for that of the Rolls Royce make.

As such, careful use of selections is key to creating images that really sell a concept or idea, as they can be used to highlight certain sections, drawing the eye where it needs to go. Of course, they come in useful in his personal work too, where robots and sci-fi are something of a favourite.

"I use the selection function a lot by getting a selection directly from a shape or an object sitting on a layer," begins Hahn on his uses of selections. "If you Cmd/Ctrl-click on the thumbnail image of a layer (containing images, text or shapes) you get a selection in the form of what is on the layer.

"So if I want to cut out something very exact – for example, metal pieces covering technical parts of my robot designs – I use the Pen tool and set it on Shape. I then draw around a silhouette of something. Photoshop creates a shape layer in the Layers window. If you now Cmd/Ctrl-click on the layer thumbnail image of the shape layer, you get that shape as a selection.

"As I never use the function to save selections, using this workflow I can always go back to my selections by clicking on the shape layers. Another beneficial result of working with the Selection tool in this way is that I can create layer masks where I can paint inside an exactly defined boundary."

## MASKING PLUG-INS

### ■ EZ Mask

EZ Mask is an interactive image masking tool capable of extracting almost any object in a given image, which includes smoke, reflections or fine hair detail. It's currently available for \$150. The same company also develops Power Mask for \$150, where the user simply paints along the edge of the object to be extracted.

### ■ Topaz ReMask

For approx £41/\$70, Topaz ReMask promises the "quickest and easiest way to extract a subject from your photo." The user simply needs to use the brush tools to paint over what they want to cut out and hit Apply. It also comes with refinement tools to perfect your mask.

### ■ Perfect Mask 8

onOne Software's Perfect Mask 8 is marketed as the essential cut-out tool for photographers. It allows users to select subjects and isolate objects with ease, and offers a range of brushes and clean-up tools to help with the process. It's available for approx £58/\$100

### CUT OUT HAIR

ICON ADVERTISING'S AJITH PRAN REVEALS HOW HE GOES ABOUT CUTTING AROUND PARTICULARLY TRICKY SECTIONS OF A MODEL'S HAIR

#### 01 SELECT THE BASE

Selection of hair can be very tricky and challenging, but thankfully Photoshop CC has a wide range of selection tools to choose from. In this example, we are selecting the model from a studio background, and we are focusing on using the Refine Edge tool. First, make a base shape using the Pen tool, and mask out a rough shape to cut out the hair as shown. Once the selection is done, mask it with 0.8px feather radius. This will maintain a smooth edge of the selection for the model base structure.

#### 03 REFINE EDGE

Use View mode for checking the selection accuracy. I have used On Black mode. Next, check Smart Radius and increase the Radius. Set the radius when the hairs are visible, and using the Refine Radius tool, paint on the area for more detail. To remove unwanted colours, use the Decontaminate Colors slider in the Output option. Once you've made a perfect selection, press OK. Make a copy layer (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and name it as Refine Edge.

#### 02 SELECT THE HAIR

After making the base shape, duplicate the background layer as Top layer and name it 'Base' for reference. Next, select the Quick Selection tool. Trace the area of the required selection, and keep adjusting the radius of the brush for a detailed selection. You can also use the Opt/Alt key to subtract and the Shift key to add to the selection. The quality of the selection will affect the computing of the Refine Edge mask. After making the selection, Go to Layer Menu>Refine Edge.

#### 04 ADD LIGHT AND DEPTH

Select the Refine Edge layer and add an Inner Shadow layer style. Select the midtone colour then set the blend mode to Normal. Adjust the opacity. Next, Ctrl/right-click on Layer Style>Create Layer. Make the new layer a clipping mask to the Refine Edge layer and erase the unwanted areas using the Brush tool. Create a new layer, change the blend mode to Color Dodge, use a soft brush and paint with dark orange on the edges of the hair.

#### 05 ADD AMBIENCE

Merge the Refine Edge layer and Base layer with the layer style. Finally, add a suitable background. Here I used an interior shot from Shutterstock. Add a Levels adjustment on the layer, add another bokeh image from Shutterstock, change the blend mode to Screen and adjust the midtones.





## PHOTOMANIPULATION SELECTIONS

PHOTOMANIP PRO MARTIN DE PASQUALE REVEALS HOW HE USES THE SELECTION TOOLS TO CREATE IMAGES THAT DEFY IMAGINATION

The main thing I need to be able to do in photomanipulation is to tie all the elements together. To do this, I need to make sure that all the photos that make up the scene were taken in the same place, and the elements that are selected match the correct lighting.

Many photographs of apples were taken for this scene, and several types of bites were taken in order to apply them to the main character. I had to very carefully select these elements and cut them out in order to place them in a realistic manner.

An interesting element of the image is the details around the bites, such as how the clothing detaches from the body. This was done in post-production using a variety of selection tools in combination with other tools.



© studio314.de

### TOP SELECTION TIPS

ARTISTS FROM THE PHOTOSHOP COMMUNITY SHARE THEIR TOP TIPS FOR THE USE OF SELECTIONS IN THEIR WORK

#### QUICK SELECTION

**John Paul Zampetti**

If you want to select an area that is similar in tone or colour to its background – a wedding dress against a light backdrop, for example – first create a temporary solar curve (a Curves adjustment layer with a handful of anchors pulled in the opposite direction from each other), which shows separations in tone more clearly and often creates stronger edge contrast. Use the Quick Selection/Magic Wand while this curve is selected.

**Jesse Peraza**

You can use the Quick Selection tool to make a selection around a subject. If you miss certain areas of the subject or selected part of the background, you can go to Window>Paths to bring out the Paths palette. Click the arrow/delta on the top-right of the palette to bring down the options. Click on Make Work Path. This will create a vector path of your

selection. You can now refine your selection using the Pen tool and convert it back to a path when you are done by holding down Cmd/Ctrl and clicking on the path thumbnail.

**Stephen Vosloo**

When painting a selection onto your subject, it can sometimes seem like it freaks out and selects the whole image. Don't just go back to the start – it's an intelligent tool, and it needs to be trained. Hold down the Opt/Alt key to set the brush to '-' and paint on areas in the image you don't want selected. Continue to do this and you'll see your selection snap to the original subject. This combined with Refine Edge makes for powerful and quick selections of objects.

#### QUICK MASK

**Jose Gonçalves**

After you make a selection, click on Q to see that selection in Quick Mask mode. Now if you want to apply feather to the selection, use Gaussian Blur to see in real-time the amount of feather you are applying. If you want to contract or expand the selection while in Quick Mask mode, use one of the

Maximum or Minimum filters. To mimic the command, apply the filter Find Edges (Filter>Stylize>Find Edges) to create a border effect. To expand or contract that border, use Maximum or Minimum.

**Valentin Gheorghe**

After you make your selection, enter Quick Mask mode and then use the Blur filter to feather the selection. This way you see exactly how much to feather instead of having to guess.

#### PEN TOOL

**Christiano Normano**

When using the Pen tool, turn on Rubber Band in the Options bar. When using this, the Pen tool will show the next bend in the segment. This will both speed up and add more accuracy to your selection.

#### REFINE EDGE

**Julia Kuzmenko McKim**

I always have the Remember Settings option on, so that my adjustment numbers are saved and already there after I make every selection and get into the Refine Edge. Considering I do similar type selections across most of my images – like most artists – this saves me a lot of time in the long run.

I often change the background colour in the View Mode. I would choose black if the selection I am making is bright, and I would choose white if the selection I am making is dark, to help my eyes better see the quality and hardness of the selection edge and refine it more accurately.

Depending on what my selection is for, I sometimes change the Output to Selection, Layer Mask or New Layer and use the Decontaminate Colors to prevent adjacent colour pixels bleeding into my selection from the outside of it.

#### LASSO TOOL

**Jose Gonçalves**

You might find you are working with the Lasso tool, but you want to change to the Polygonal tool without



© Thomas Burden

leaving the Lasso tool, and then get back again. To do this, press Opt/Alt while holding down the mouse button. When you take your finger from the mouse, you will now find you are using the Polygonal tool. To get back to Lasso, press the mouse, release Opt/Alt and you will be using Lasso again.

## CHANNEL SELECTION

**Petri Anttila**

Go to the Channels palette and see which of the channels have the biggest difference between highlights and shadows. Duplicate it and make it the only one active. Go to the Adjustment panel and open Curves. You can then start dragging Shadows and Highlights towards the middle so you will have just black and white on the image. If you have trouble on some parts of the image, you can use a black or white brush to paint it over. Go to the Select palette and click Color Range. Now you have a perfect selection of the area you want!

## COLOR RANGE

**Christiano Normano**

This is a great tool for selections, as every image you work on is based on colour and tones, so why not select this way? You then can add an adjustment layer to that selection and you can refine your selection with the Fuzziness slider.

## MARQUEE TOOLS

**Jeff Whitlock**

When using basic Marquee tools, refine the defined shape further by going to the Select menu and then scroll down to Transform Selection. A bounding box will appear around your selection. Ctrl/right-click within the box and a menu will appear showing the



## DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE LASSO

WHEN BJÖRN EWERS OF GERMAN DESIGN COMPANY STUDIO314 MAKES SELECTIONS, HE ALSO STARTS WITH A ROUGH SELECTION USING THE POLYGONAL LASSO TOOL

"When the image fits perfectly in the size and I like what I see, I start with a more precise selection.

"When I started with Photoshop, I cut everything with the Lasso tool using my Wacom tablet. Nowadays I am lazier and use the Polygonal Lasso tool for random forms.

"When I have to work very precisely I no longer use the Lasso tool and I switch to the Path tool, particularly when it comes to perfect-shaped objects like cars. After my selection is done, I try to make the edge less sharp. In most cases a 2px soft edge works well.

"When it comes to much more difficult selections like hair, blurry edges or translucent elements, I really love to use Photoshop's Refine Edge tool. Sometimes it works almost perfectly, but sometimes, especially on basic selections like sharp corners, it can cause a lot of trouble in image-making.

"Following Refine Edge, I have an overall look on my final selection and rework wherever necessary. Finally I have a last look in my alpha mask to see if everything is perfectly separated into black and white."



variety of transformations that can be applied to your marquee selection, such as scale warp, rotate and perspective. It's a great alternative to using the Pen tool for many types of selections!

## MAGIC WAND

**John Ross**

After making a selection with the Magic Wand, there are often tiny areas left out. Rather than trying to get every little bit by hand, use Select>Modify>Expand>2 and then Select>Modify>Feather>2 to fill in the little pinholes left behind. It will also enhance blending and softening of the edges. The Values may change depending on the size of the image, but if 2 is not enough, you can expand it to 4-5 or more. This trick can also be used with Color Range, which also leaves behind similar missed areas.

When using the Magic Wand tool, the Options bar has a radial button called Contiguous. When checked on, the wand will grab similar touching, or adjacent, pixels. The benefit is that it will allow you to work in a smaller, more controlled area of the image. When unchecked, the wand will grab similar pixels from across the entire image.

# 20 OF THE BEST PLUG-INS

WE LOOK AT THE BEST PLUG-INS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU BE MORE PRODUCTIVE, SAVE TIME, GET CREATIVE AND DESIGN PROFESSIONAL PROJECTS IN PHOTOSHOP

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## 01. ONONE SOFTWARE PERFECT EFFECTS 8

ONONE SOFTWARE

[www.ononesoftware.com](http://www.ononesoftware.com) / Approx £89/\$150

onOne Software does a wide range of high-end plug-ins for

Photoshop that help you to edit, retouch, enhance and get creative with your images. Perfect Effects is just one of these and is designed to add filter effects to your photos. The filters can be customised to suit your needs and there are various presets to help you get started. It can be used to replicate the look of certain film effects, add 'dynamic contrast' to photos, place selective lens blur and emulate a HDR style, among other effects.

One of the reasons that we like onOne Software's range of products is that they are easy to use, but actually make a big difference. Many of the effects could be created in Photoshop using the built-in tools, but it would take a lot longer to do and would be more difficult to amend. Perfect Effects enables you to build up filters in a Filter Stack, so you can combine different effects to get a distinct look.

You do pay a premium for a good filter package such as this one, so it is worth reviewing the online supporting material to see what the program can do, as well as make the most of the free trial available.

© slusarenko on www.freeimages.com



## 02. TEXTURE ANARCHY

### DIGITAL ANARCHY

[www.digitalanarchy.com](http://www.digitalanarchy.com) / Approx £77/\$129

Texture Anarchy is a plug-in that lives up to its name, giving you access to textures and borders that can be infinitely scaled without losing quality, as well as giving you the ability to create your own designs. It is split into three key plug-ins: Texture Explorer, which is the main area to create seamless textures; Tiler Anarchy, for creating repeated seamless designs; and Edge Anarchy to create borders. You use one of the many built-in presets as a starting point from which you can begin experimenting. The textures are created by layering one of 38 different noise types on top of each other and combined to give different effects. The textures are great for using in both 2D and 3D workflows, and they can help to bring your typography to life. Once you have mastered the basics, then there is a Lighting Editor and a Bump Map that enable you to create powerful textures that have myriad professional applications.



## 03. NKS5 NATURAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

[www.nkurence.com/blog](http://www.nkurence.com/blog) / Free (donations accepted)

This plug-in is one for digital painters. In fact, it's not a plug-in as such; it is an extension that is installed through the Adobe Extension Manager. It has been created by an artist and it is a collection of natural media, texturing and production tools. When you install it, it adds a new palette into the Photoshop workspace and it is packed with tools. You can use it to create documents that look like real-media products, such as paper, notepad, graph paper and more. From there, you can draw with pencils, pens and markers, as well as paint with watercolours. There are texturing tools, guides and margins and brush presets as well. When it is all put together, it becomes a powerful alternative to Photoshop's own painting toolset, as the brushes are very realistic, and simply the way that everything has been collected together in one place means that there is a lot less trawling through menus to complete different tasks – leaving you to get on with the actual painting. This sort of extension for Photoshop shows that it's not just the well-known and expensive packages that make a difference to your workflow.



## 04. MACHINE WASH DELUXE

### MISTER RETRO

[www.misterretro.com](http://www.misterretro.com) / Approx £59/\$99

Machine Wash is a set of texture filters that add an aged look to your designs. It can make photographs look worn and vintage, but it is probably better applied to graphic design projects, especially poster layouts and text. There are over 3,000 presets available within the program that offer different looks, and these effects can be applied to your whole image or in a more targeted way.



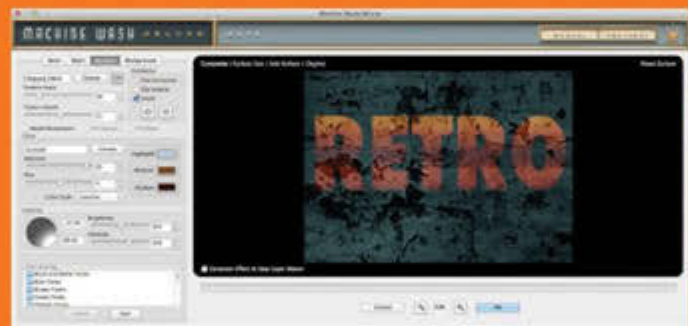
### 01 | BASIC SETTINGS

Under Basic you can select from preset filters to apply to your design. If you tick Filter Settings, you can see the textures that have been layered up to create the effect, which helps you to see how filters are generated.



### 02 | WASH OPTIONS

Go into the Wash tab and you can begin to create your own look. Click on Texture to load up the textures available and apply, then customise to suit your needs. You can save any looks that you like so that you don't have to remember all your combinations.



### 03 | SURFACE DESIGN

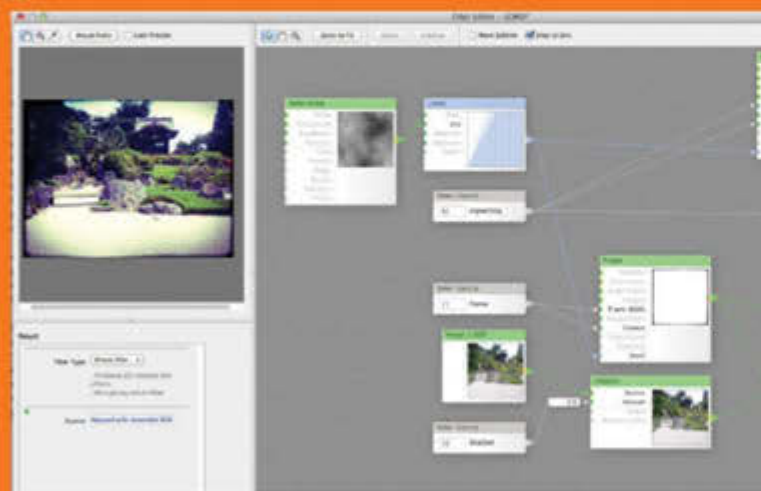
Once the texture is in place, add depth with the lighting and contrast controls in the Surface tab, which help to add realism to the final design. Select the Generate Effect in New Layer Above option before applying, so you can continue working on it in Photoshop.

## 20 BEST PLUGINS

### 05. SILVER EFEX PRO 2 GOOGLE NIK COLLECTION

[www.google.com/nikcollection](http://www.google.com/nikcollection) / Approx £89/\$149

This plug-in is designed especially for creating striking black and white photography. It emulates old film types, as well as adding tones and borders to finish the look. The algorithms that are used are very powerful so that you get a realistic result, but the whole process is editable so that you can tweak it to get the image that you want. There is a built-in History Browser so that you can undo adjustments easily and re-apply, as well as a whole host of tools to selectively alter your photo. The price quoted here is actually for the Nik Collection bundle (you can't buy the products individually any more), so for that price you also get Analog Efex Pro, HDR Efex Pro, Dfine, Color Efex Pro, Viveza and Sharpener Pro, which makes this quite a bargain.



### 06. FILTER FORGE FILTER FORGE INC

[www.filterforge.com](http://www.filterforge.com) / From approx £89/\$149

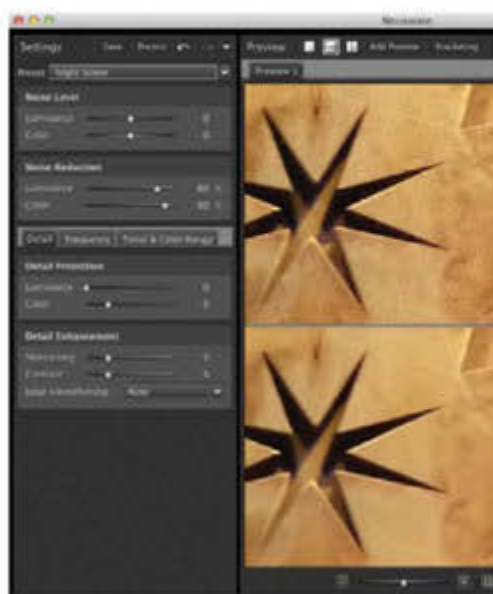
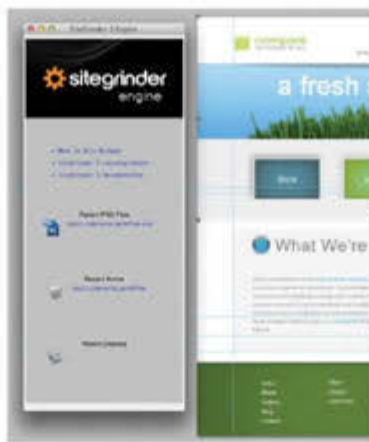
Filter Forge is a plug-in that works in two key ways. First, it gives you access to over 10,000 filters that have been created by its community, which means that you can create some interesting effects with little effort. The real power comes from the fact that you can use the plug-in to create your own filters using the visual node-based editor. It can be a bit complicated to get your head around at first, so it is worth exploring the Support section on the website, which has tutorials to follow to get started. Filter Forge comes in three versions – Basic, Standard and Professional – so it depends what functionality you need. For example, if you wanted to create your own filters, you couldn't do that with the Basic version, so it is worth considering one of the more advanced suites. The Professional version is available on a subscription model, which helps to manage the cost.



### 07. SITEGRINDER 3 MEDIALAB

[www.medialab.com](http://www.medialab.com) / £TBC

SiteGrinder is one of the best-known web design plug-ins for Photoshop. It is designed for those who want to create striking website designs, but don't have the skill or the inclination to do any coding. You can create a design using Photoshop, and SiteGrinder will slice it and code it for you, which makes life a lot easier. When you first get the plug-in, there is a sample PSD for you to play with to understand how it all goes together, but there is also an extensive Help section on the website. There are various templates available as well to give you a starting point if you need something to base your design on.



### 08. NOISEWARE IMAGENOMIC

[www.imagenomic.com](http://www.imagenomic.com) / Approx £48/\$80

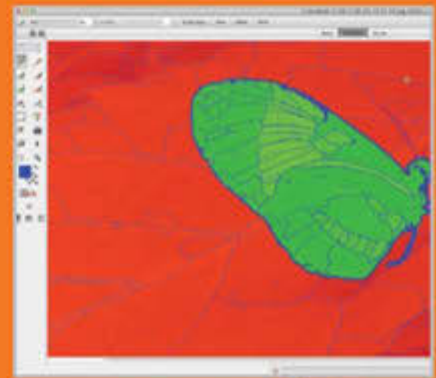
Noise is a problem many photographers have to deal with. Photoshop can do a fair job of removing it, but there are plug-ins available that do the work quicker and with better results, making a worthwhile purchase. One of the best of these is Noiseware by Imagenomic, which uses a powerful algorithm to eliminate different types of noise from your photos. It manages to retain image quality and detail during the process, which is the biggest problem with any process that affects the pixels in a photo. There is a free trial available, so you can try it out, and it can also be bought as part of a bundle with the company's other plug-ins, including Portraiture, which is also featured here.

### 09. FLUID MASK 3 VERTUS

[www.vertustech.com](http://www.vertustech.com) /

Approx £89/\$149

Vertus Fluid Mask is one of the best-known plug-ins for masking in Photoshop, and it is now in its third version. It's not cheap, but it does offer a high-end solution to creating complex masks on any subject and is a real timesaver if you need a lot of extracting done. There is a free trial available. Image processing time has been greatly improved and it is packed with tools to help you target image areas, no matter how finely detailed they are.

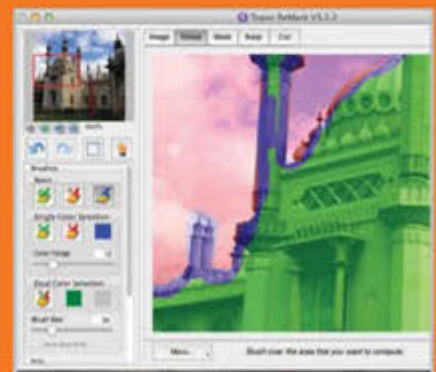


### 10. TOPAZ REMASK TOPAZ LABS

[www.topazlabs.com](http://www.topazlabs.com) /

Approx £42/\$70

This plug-in is designed to make masking tasks quick and easy, saving you time when working on complex compositions. It is available as a free trial, so you can try before you buy, but it lives up to its promise of being simple to use with fast results. It is designed for difficult masking tasks, like hair or similarly coloured objects, and it works using a painting system where you brush over areas that need to be kept or discarded.





© Andreas Krappweis on www.freeimages.com



## 11. TOPAZ SIMPLIFY

### TOPAZ LABS

[www.topazlabs.com](http://www.topazlabs.com) / Approx £24/\$40

Not everyone is a natural with a paintbrush, digital or otherwise, which is why there are plenty of filters and plug-ins for Photoshop that look to turn your photos into works of art in minutes. As with many filters of this ilk, there are the good, the bad and the downright ugly. Topaz Simplify is one of the best, thanks to its ability to create realistic results that look as though you have painstakingly painted in every minute detail. There are various looks you can achieve, from watercolour to oil painting, and pencil sketch to charcoal.

The plug-in opens from within Photoshop and there are a number of presets to get you started with the vague look you are after. You can customise all of the filters that you want to use with sliders down the right of the screen. It's easy to completely change the look of a filter into something right for you, so not every image will come out looking like a carbon copy of the one before it.

Despite the quality results, this is actually one of the cheaper plug-ins that we have looked at here. If you need fine-art results, then this is definitely worth your consideration.



## ENLARGE YOUR PHOTOS



## 12. BLOW UP 3

### ALIEN SKIN SOFTWARE

[www.alienskin.com](http://www.alienskin.com) / Approx £59/\$99

Sometimes there are photos that you want to use in your designs and they are just not big enough. It's a cardinal sin to simply upscale them without thinking about the result, but there are plug-ins that enable you to get more inches without losing quality. Blow Up uses a similar system to Photoshop's Resize command, so it's instantly familiar. The difference is that it uses powerful algorithms to maintain high quality without introducing any artefacts.



## 13. PERFECT RESIZE 8

### ONONE SOFTWARE

[www.ononesoftware.com](http://www.ononesoftware.com) / Approx £89/\$150

This is an industry-standard resizing application that uses interpolation algorithms to enlarge photos to a high standard. It comes in two versions: Standard and Premium. We've only looked at the Premium here as it works as a Photoshop plug-in, whereas the Standard version is standalone only. Aside from that, the Premium option also lets you batch edit, resize CMYK, Lab and Greyscale images, and opens RAW camera files, making it the more appropriate choice.

#### 14. EXPOSURE 5 ALIEN SKIN SOFTWARE

[www.alienskin.com](http://www.alienskin.com) / Approx £89/\$149

Alien Skin Software creates a wide range of high-end plug-ins for Photoshop users, but one of the best is Exposure. It is designed to help you emulate various traditional film looks, such as lo-fi and old-school film types. The results are realistic and professional, unlike some of the cheaper filter programs available that can look cheesy and over the top. There are hundreds of presets built in that apply different effects with a single click, and these can be previewed before applying. However, when you are using the program, it is best to consider these presets as a starting point for experimentation, as the best results come from combining filters in different ways, layering them up subtly to create something completely unique.

The presets can be customised individually too, so it is possible to have countless combinations, ensuring that you don't get that 'straight out of the box' look. Those customised presets and combinations can then be saved so that you can build up a library of your own personalised effects that can be applied to any of your future projects quickly. Version 5 of Exposure has been updated with a brand new look and features, so it is always worth an upgrade if you have tried an earlier version, and there is a free trial available too.



© 2013 peter nguyen

### THREE FREE EXTENSIONS WORTH TRYING

Photoshop's Extension Manager has opened the door for developers, artists and designers to come up with panels and scripts that enhance the functionality of Photoshop in a simple way. The best part is that these are usually free, they are easy to install and try out, and you can even create your own (have a Google search to find out how). We round up three extensions that we reckon are worth a look.



#### 15. GUIDEGUIDE CAMERON MCEFFEE

[www.guideguide.me](http://www.guideguide.me) / Free

This simple palette is designed for those who work with grid layouts on a regular basis – web

designers, app designers and so on. It gives you pixel-accurate columns, rows, midpoints and baselines, created based on your documents or selections. You can also save frequently used grid setups for future use.



#### 16. BLENDME.IN BLENDME.IN

[www.blendme.in](http://www.blendme.in) / Free

This handy little panel gives you access to thousands of assets, such as vector icon packs, that you can drag and drop into your work. The assets are all under the

Creative Commons Attribution Licence, which means you can use them in your commercial projects too. It's easy to install, and in the latest version of the extension, you can add your own files as a Collection to browse in the same way.



#### 17. FONTSHOP PLUGIN FONTSHOP INTERNATIONAL

[www.fontshop.com](http://www.fontshop.com) / Free

This panel is linked to the FontShop website and enables you to browse any of its 150,000-plus fonts from within a panel in Photoshop. This

comes in handy when working on layout designs, as you can try out a font and see if it works. You can get a preview of the font in your document, search for a particular font and tag your favourites.

### 18. 3D INVIGORATOR

DIGITAL ANARCHY/ZAXWERKS INC

[www.digitalanarchy.com](http://www.digitalanarchy.com) / Approx £119/\$199

Although Photoshop now includes 3D-editing capabilities, those with older versions or those who want a little more control over their 3D objects can give this plug-in a go. It gives a true 3D environment inside Photoshop, using vector tools to draw and edit 3D shapes. There is a Material Editor to build textures and create striking 3D designs. You can use vector shapes, text or Adobe Illustrator files to create the base of your 3D object, so there are lots of possibilities for creating all kinds of 3D graphics. In the most recent version of the program, it is now possible to import an image and map that image onto a 3D object, as well as see shadows updated live thanks to an improved OpenGL.



© Image courtesy of Colin Cheer, Electric Eye/Mighty Dots

## RETOUCH PORTRAITS IN MINUTES

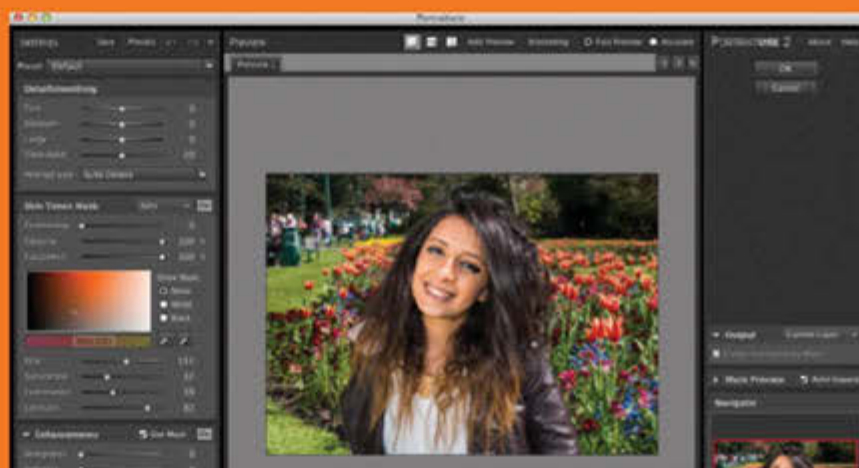
### 19. PORTRAITURE

IMAGENOMIC

[www.imagenomic.com](http://www.imagenomic.com) /

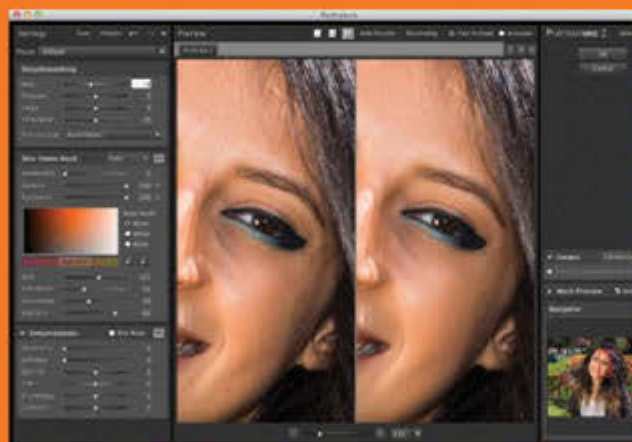
Approx £119/\$200

This is an incredibly powerful plug-in and one of the best for retouching that we have come across. It does a great job of auto-masking an image to isolate skin tones and apply smoothing based on a number of presets. It can be customised and edited to get the look you want, but for batch retouching it does save a lot of time over doing the whole process manually.



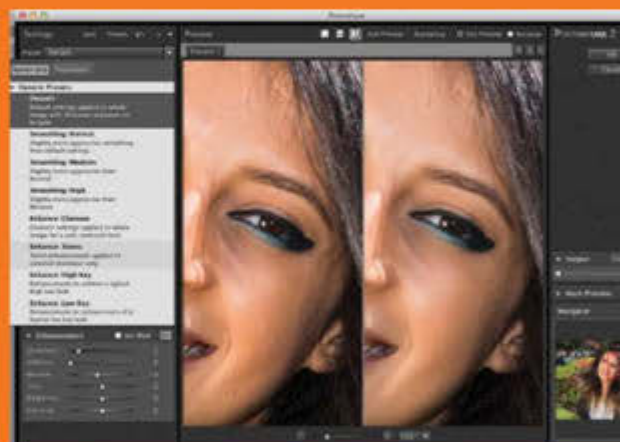
### 01 | AUTO ENHANCEMENTS

When you start the filter, it will automatically apply default retouching to your image, which gives you a good base to work from. You can then use the sliders on the left in order to customise the finish.



### 02 | PREVIEW

Make sure that you have a Preview view selected so that you can see both the before and after, and zoom right in. This will enable you to work with more precision. You can also save presets based on your edits if you get a look you like.



### 03 | PRESETS

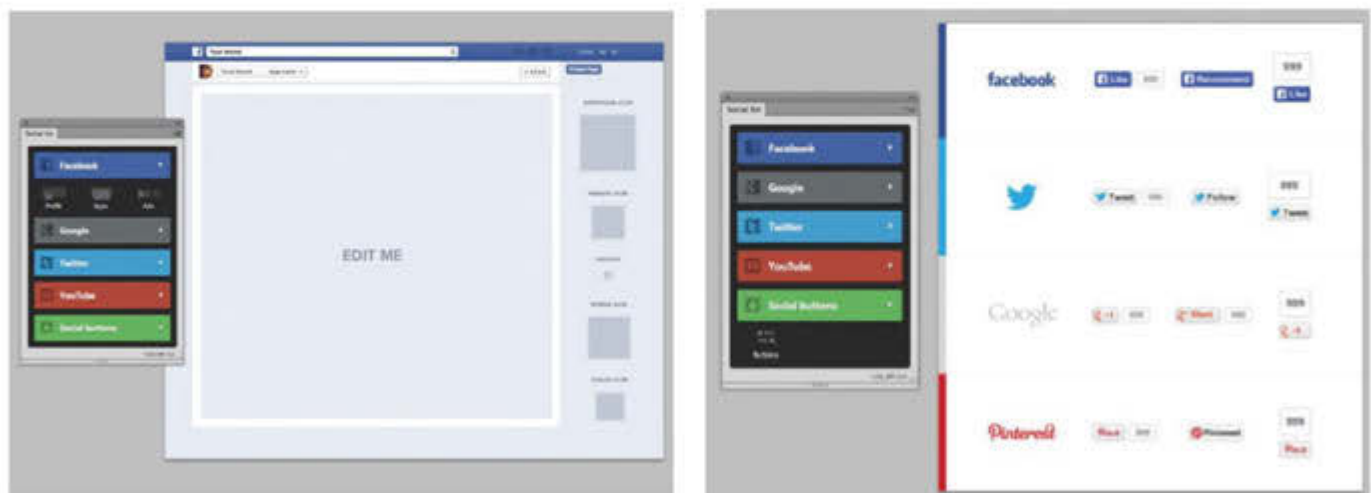
There are a selection of presets that come in handy if you are looking for a specific effect, such as High Key or Low Key. These are again really good for setting the base look, which you can then tweak to suit your final image.



## 20. SOCIAL KIT SOURCE

<http://socialkit.madebysource.com> / Free

This is a Photoshop extension that is designed to make light work of creating templates for use on popular social media websites. It creates correctly sized and ready-sliced templates for Facebook, Google Plus, Twitter and YouTube, which you can use to make customised designs for yourself or your clients. It is automatically updated as you work so that you can see exactly what your layout will look like before it goes live, and the extension is updated as the social media sites implement new changes. This is the kind of app that seems a bit simplistic at first, but actually there are some very clever Facebook designs out there that use the profile picture and cover design in a unique way. This extension will help you come up with your own ideas and test them out before uploading to Facebook or any other social media site.



# PHOTOMANIPULATION

Discover the world of photomanipulation, learn from Photoshop experts and get started with advanced image transformation

## **028** Master retouching

Use Photoshop to produce an image that combines standard retouching techniques with creative ones

## **034** Produce creative lighting effects

Learn how to build a dynamic advertising image with 3D elements, render passes and lighting techniques

## **040** Make pro selections

Create a dynamic rooftop basketball court with a beautiful skyline that combines amazing colours

## **046** Design an epic fantasy landscape

Combine photo elements and painting techniques to create photoreal concept art

## **052** Create sci-fi cityscapes

Learn to combine cityscape elements with rural landscape elements to create a futuristic blade runner-style scene

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**034**

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**052**

“When retouching,  
direct the viewer's  
eye to where you  
want them to go

PAGE  
**046**





# MASTER RETOUCHING

USE PHOTOSHOP TO PRODUCE AN IMAGE THAT COMBINES STANDARD RETOUCHING TECHNIQUES WITH CREATIVE ONES

**W**hen working on composite images, you will often find yourself jumping back and forth from one element to the other. As you continue to manipulate the layers and masks, you will often find that colour and tone that looked good before may not match the evolution of the final image.

The success of a composite image relies on the artist's ability to make changes and tweaks throughout the creative process. One way to give more flexibility is by using adjustment layers for lighting effects, rather than a blank layer with a paintbrush. Besides the usual Opacity and blend

modes, you will also have additional sliders and options for greater efficiency.

Expand your creativity by also introducing Smart Objects to your workflow. At any point in time, you can go back to the original RAW file and make the same changes there, without the need for more layers and masks. Used with Smart Filters, you can make changes to the filter's settings whenever you want.

Layer effects allow you to build upon existing layers, without the need to create more layers and do extra work with the Brush tool. They are another great way to enhance your images within a non-destructive workflow.

## RETOUCH THE MODEL

START WITH BASICS LIKE CLONING, COLOUR AND TONAL CHANGES

**01** **CAMERA RAW FILTER**  
Open 'Imensia.tif' from the source files. In the Layers panel, Ctrl/right-click and select Convert to Smart Object. Use Filter>Camera Raw Filter to begin doing some basic colour and tonal corrections. Click OK. Smart Objects will give you flexibility in a non-destructive workflow. This is great when working with composites. Name this Layer 'Original Model'.



**02** **CAMERA RAW AND SMART OBJECTS**  
With CS6 and older, you can use Camera Raw's Preferences to open 'All Supported TIFFs', which will open this image in Camera Raw to make changes. To go from Camera Raw to Photoshop, hold down the Shift key. It will change Open Image to Open Object. You will now have access to these changes later for further tweaking.



**03** **PREPARE THE MODEL**  
Create a new blank layer for your cloning and touch-up. Smooth out the skin, enhance the eyes, and clean up some flyaway hair. Some wrinkles can be removed with the Healing Brush, while others may prefer Dodge and Burn. You will make many adjustments later, but starting with a clean image will lead to the best final results.



### OUR EXPERT

**JOHN ROSS**  
[www.TheArtOfRetouching.com](http://www.TheArtOfRetouching.com)  
[@ArtOfRetouching](https://twitter.com/ArtOfRetouching)

Ross specialises in portrait and composite retouching. He has worked in advertising and editorial for 20 years, and lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut.

### SOURCE FILES

You can find the model and disk-shape images at [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609). The additional images and brushes can be found at [deviantart.com](http://deviantart.com) and [shutterstock.com](http://shutterstock.com).

### WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM STUDIO TO COMPOSITE FANTASY



Progress 1: Prep the photos



Progress 2: Compositing



Progress 3: Final effects



## 04 | ANOTHER SMART OBJECT

Select all the layers and Convert to Smart Object. Name it 'Retouched Model Bottom', and change the Opacity to 95%. To make changes to the model later, you can go back to this base image by double-clicking the Smart Object layer. This layer will contain all of the corrections you have made to the model. If you want to change it later, just double-click again, and a new window will open. Make your changes and then save the adjusted image.

## 06 | PLACE THE DISK

Open the image 'Disk.psd' provided on [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609). Drag and drop the Disk layer containing the shape underneath the model's layer and above the Galaxy layer. Move the Disk layer into position behind the model's body. Use Opt/Alt while clicking on the Disk layer to create a selection of the shape, and then click the Add Layer Mask icon at bottom of the Layers panel. Change the blending mode of the Disk layer to Screen. This will give a mask of the intricate shape.

## 07 | ADD THE DISK'S LAYER EFFECTS

Select all the pixels on the Disk layer and delete them. All you want is the shape as a mask – the pixels will not matter. Use the FX icon at the bottom of the Layers panel and enable Outer Glow with settings of Screen, 75% Opacity, Size 56%, and pick a blue colour. Next, enable Drop Shadow with a black colour set to 75% Opacity, Distance of 10, and Size of 5. All the other settings can remain as defaults. Click OK.



## 05 | BEGIN COMPOSITING

Create a layer mask for the model's Smart Object layer and loosely cut her out using a brush on the layer mask. Close is good enough because you can fix this later when you have a better idea of how it will look when it's all put together. Place a galaxy image like <http://tinyurl.com/lxya5t8> from deviantART behind the model. Use the Camera Raw or Camera Raw filter method like before to make the colour and tonal changes. Place all these visible layers into a folder called 'Back'.



## 08 | ADD THE DISK'S GLOW

From the disk centre, use the Elliptical Marquee while holding down the Shift key. Select a Curves adjustment layer. Move the curve up, and set to Luminosity blend mode. This goes above the Back folder. Name it 'Disk Glow'. Use Layer FX to select Outer Glow, Precise, and Size of 81, with the rest default. Place Disk Glow into a new group folder called 'Disk Glow Cutout'. Add a white layer mask to the group, using a black brush to stop the glow from crossing over the model's legs.

### ■ QUICK TIP

Photoshop CC now supports linked Smart Objects. This means you can work on a full size image in great detail. After saving, you can link it to another document at whatever size you want, without the need to double or triple the size of your final composite while working on it.

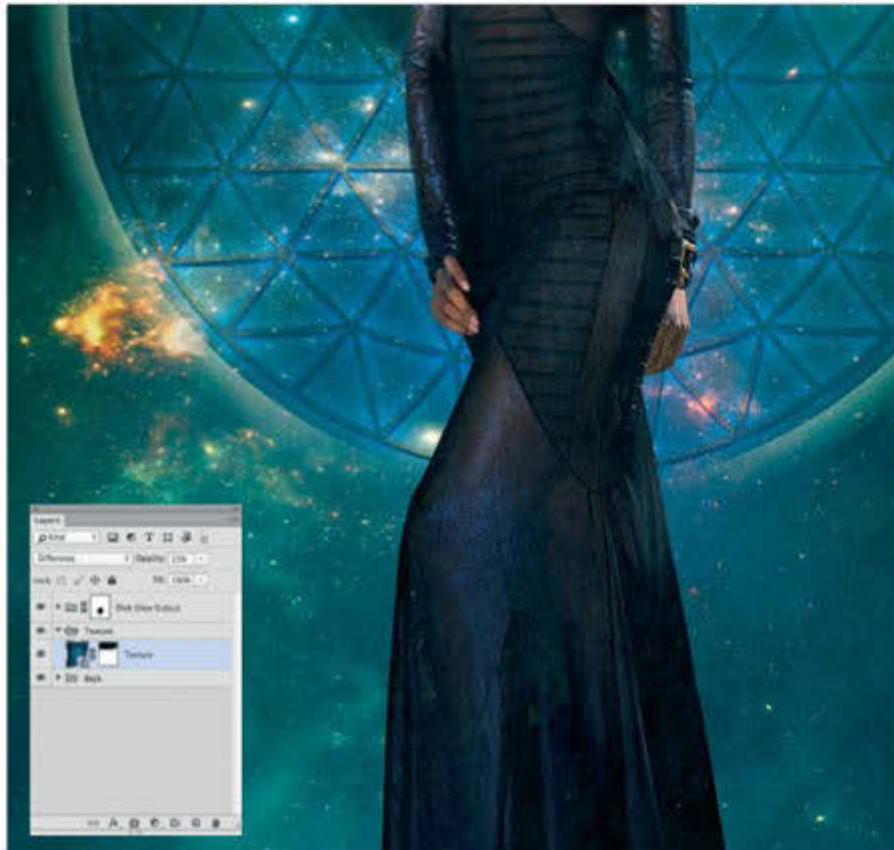


## REFINE THE MODEL AND LIGHTING

ADD TEXTURE, LIGHTING AND LAYER BLENDING

### 09 ADD TEXTURE

Above the Back folder, create a new folder called 'Texture'. Inside, place a textured image layer of your choice like <http://tinyurl.com/mrgl6fv> from deviantART and cover it over the whole image. Drop the Opacity down to 15% with a blend mode of Difference. This begins to add a painterly effect. Add a layer mask, and paint black to remove the effect from the top half of the image, where you want to retain the details. White will be on the bottom, revealing the texture effect.



### 11 ADD GLOW AND STAR BURSTS

Under the Retouched Model Top layer, create a new Curves adjustment layer. Pull up on the middle of the curve to lighten over the image. Fill the mask with black to hide the effect, then use a white brush to paint in a glow under the Top Model with various brushes of different sizes and shapes. Create multiple Curves layers, with different settings, and different opacities. You can find many custom brushes perfect for the task at <http://www.deviantart.com/morelikethis/99002450>.

### 12 BEGIN THE BLENDING

Now that you can begin to see it come together, you can really start fine-tuning the layer masks for the two model layers. For the bottom model layer, you should keep the body tight and let the gravel at the bottom fade up into the sky. Mask the loose hair, and let the wispy parts blow around. For the top layer, keep the parts you want the natural colour and erase away, starting at the chest. You can continue to clean these masks up later, as needed.



### 10 DUPLICATE THE MODEL

Select the Retouched Model Bottom layer, and drag it onto the New Blank Layer icon. This will create a second model layer, but still reference the same embedded Smart Object. So if you want to alter one Smart Object, it will apply the same change to the other layer. Place it above the Texture folder. Name it 'Retouched Model Top', with 100% Opacity. Paint on the layer mask to erase the lower half of the layer. This will make more sense in the next step.

“ Smart Objects can go back to the original RAW files without a need for extra layers ”



### 13 ADD A GRADIENT MAP

Above the Texture layer, add a Gradient Map adjustment layer. Click on the gradient's drop-down, and then the sprocket. You will see many new types to choose from. For now, choose Photographic Toning. Cycle through the options until you find one you like. A blue one would be nice. On the layer mask, paint away the top half of the image with a black brush. Blend it in so that while a different colour, the bottom gradient merges with the top area seamlessly.

## ■ GROUNDING THE SCENE

ADD DEPTH, EMOTION AND CHARACTER WITH THE FINISHING

**14** **ADD TEXTURE LIGHT**  
Above the Texture layer, add a Curves layer if you want to lighten up the image. With all these layers being added, the image starts to get too dark. This should really start adding depth to the image, now that you have had a chance to play with the tonal range. Remember, you want to see the details of the texture in the lower areas of the frame, as well as ensure that the upper body remains the focal point of the image.

“When retouching, direct the viewer’s eye to where you want them to go. Bring the focus to the most important areas of your composition”



**15** **ADD TEXTURE SHADOWS**  
Under the Texture layer, make a Curves adjustment layer. Bring the curve down around half way. Fill the mask with black. With a white brush, you can start to paint back in the darker tone around the lower half of the image. Focus it on the left and right sides, as well as over the gravel at the bottom. Avoid painting over the model’s legs. You want to try and keep this detail, not darken it up. We will add details back in the next step.



## 16 ADD GEOMETRIC SHAPES

By using image 166758839 from Shutterstock or similar, you can add geometric patterns to the lower half of the image, off in the distance. Apply the shape to a Curves layer mask, but do not apply any changes with the Curves tool. Instead, use Layer FX with Outer Glow of blue, and a Size of 29px. Also add a Drop Shadow with a Distance of 31px and Size of 16px. Set the layer's blend mode to Screen.



### ■ FOCUS ON THE FOCAL POINT

When retouching, direct the viewer's eye to where you want them to go. Bring the focus to the most important areas. Warm colours come forward, cool colours go backwards... bright tone comes forward, dark tone goes backward. With these simple principles, you can guide the viewer through the image. In a portrait, the face should be the brightest and warmest. By creating darker barriers around the sides and lower part of the image, you can often hold the viewer's attention much longer. The darker and cooler areas do not need to be severe; even subtle shifts can lead to favourable results.

## 17 DUPLICATE GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Select the Curves layer with the geometric shapes on it, and use Cmd/Ctrl+J to duplicate the layer. On the lower version, go into the Layer FX and disable Outer Glow and Drop Shadow, then enable Stroke with a Size 46px, Position: Outer, Blend Mode: Soft Light, and Opacity: 7%. This blend mode should be Normal. To match the glow of the circular shape behind the model, add your own halo around these new geometric shapes. You could use a brush, or Layer FX with a mask for accuracy.



## 18 ADD PAINT SPLATTER

Make a new Curves adjustment layer on top of everything. Bring the middle of the curve up half way, and fill the layer mask with black. Using a white custom brush with paint splatters from <http://mouritsada-stock.deviantart.com/art/Brush-Pack-Splashes-Of-Paint-94180220>, you can add splashes of paint around the image. For variety, adjust the Opacity of the layer, or arc of the curve. You can use one Curves adjustment layer, or several with different settings. Also try some Layer FX like Outer Glow for added realism.



### ■ QUICK TIP

By using the Brush panel's Shape Dynamics, you can adjust the Size Jitter, Fade Jitter, and Roundness Jitter. When you paint with the brush now, it will randomly change many of your brush settings as you paint. There's also Scattering, Texture, and Wet Edges, as some of the many options available.

# PRODUCE CREATIVE LIGHTING EFFECTS

LEARN HOW TO BUILD A DYNAMIC ADVERTISING IMAGE WITH 3D ELEMENTS, RENDER PASSES & LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

**T**he biggest issue when compositing 3D elements with real-life photos is ensuring that the colours and lighting match, to make the image look as real as possible.

This tutorial will discuss how to do this, both initially in 3D software and later in Photoshop. The 3D software will give you from 80 to 90 per cent matching, but you will have to crank it up to ensure that the blending is seamless by using compositing

tools and the knowledge you will gain from this advanced tutorial.

You will also learn what render passes are, which ones to use, and the kind of mattes you will need when constructing 3D objects. In the Photoshop section you will learn how to follow a non-destructive workflow with the use of Smart Objects. After completing the tutorial, you will have the knowledge to create a pro advertising scene.



## COMBINE THE ELEMENTS

GET WHAT YOU NEED FROM 3D SOFTWARE AND LAYER ELEMENTS IN PHOTOSHOP

### 01 CREATE MOTION BLUR REFLECTIONS

This method can be applied in any 3D package, but in our case we used Maya. Create polygonal plans around the car, with different colours that match the street scene and create nice reflections on the car. A HDR image will be used to light the scene. Don't just light the scene with indirect lighting from the HDRI, though; you also have to use a direct light to reduce 'blotchiness' in the final image.



### 02 EXPORT THE MAJOR PASSES FROM THE 3D PACKAGE

The render passes are very important. They give you a great amount of control after the rendering process, especially if you work in 32 bit, so you have to export as many as you can. There are some major ones you have to export though: Diffuse, Global Illumination, Reflection, Refraction, Specular, Occlusion, and RGB Matte. The pass names may differ from one render engine to the next.



#### OUR EXPERT

**MAHMOUD YOUSSEF**

[be.net/Mahmoud\\_youssef](http://be.net/Mahmoud_youssef)

Youssef is a 3D generalist and has worked in many areas across the creative industry, including animation, advertising, channels identity and publishing.

#### SOURCE FILES

You will find all the passes needed to re-create this image, and the major layers that make up the final look at [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609). The background scene is from [thinkstockphotos.com](http://thinkstockphotos.com).

### WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM RAW RENDER IMAGES TO FINAL AD



Progress 1: Import the passes



Progress 2: Add the occlusion pass and ground shadow path



Progress 3: Add glow to the car

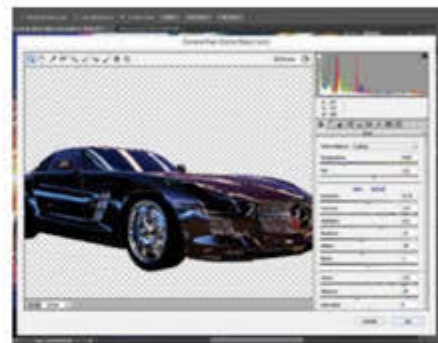




**03 | SET THE BACKGROUND TO 32 BIT**  
In order to get a great glowing effect and colours, you have to use 32-bit images, so convert the background to 32 bit and adjust it with Camera Raw. To do this, open your document in Photoshop and go to Image>Mode>32 Bits/Channel. Then go to Filter>Camera Raw. Adjust your image to get the look you want to achieve. I set Temperature to 4150, Tint to 10, Exposure to -1.15, Contrast to 12, Highlights to -51, Shadows to 33, Whites to 41, Blacks to 100, Clarity to 8, Vibrance to 31 and Saturation to 0.



**04 | IMPORT THE PASSES INTO PHOTOSHOP**  
Import the main passes into Photoshop (Lighting, Global Illumination, Reflection 1, Reflection 2, Refraction and Specular). Drag and drop the files onto the street scene. The layer order isn't important, but my personal preference is to put the lighting at the bottom. Then change the blending mode of the rest of the passes. To do this, select them, go to the Layers panel and change the blending mode from Normal to Add. While they are still selected, go to Layer>Create Clipping Mask to prevent any artefacts appearing around the edges.



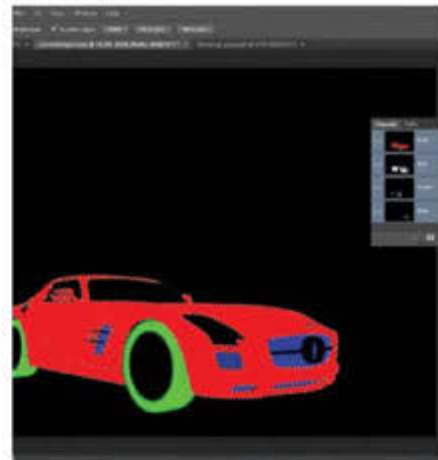
**05 | BRIGHTEN THE REFLECTIONS**  
Go to the Layers panel and select Reflection 1, then go to Filter>Camera Raw. The goal here is to increase the contrast and highlights. Try to play around with the values, but feel free to use my settings: Temperature 4400, Tint 10, Exposure -0.15, Contrast 33, Highlights 24, Shadows -17, Whites -15, Blacks -1, Clarity 72, Vibrance -25, Saturation 0. If you want to remove any artefacts in any pass – for example, I found super blown-out pixels in the Specular pass – go to Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All, then with a black brush, paint on the blown-out pixels to hide them.



**06 | ADD THE OCCLUSION PASS AND GROUND SHADOW PATH**  
First, drag and drop the Occlusion pass onto your scene. A dialog box will appear. Choose Alpha Channel then hit OK. Put the Occlusion layer at the top of the stacking order by either drag and dropping from the Layers panel or go to Layer>Arrange>Bring to Front. Then change its blending mode from Normal to Multiply. Drag and drop the Ground Shadow onto the scene. With the layer selected, go to Layer>Arrange>Send to Back and also change its blending mode to Multiply.



**07 | CHANGE THE MAIN COLOUR OF THE CAR**  
You can make the car whatever colour you want, but first you need to know what passes make up the colour. In our case they are Lighting, Specular and GI. So to change the colour of the car, drag the Specular and GI passes just above the Lighting layer and then go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation and play around with the values (I used Hue -133, Saturation -72, and Value -5). Then go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Exposure and enter the values Exposure -0.28, Offset -0.0165, Gamma Correction 0.50.



**08 | IMPORT THE RGB MASK**  
The easiest way to use the RGB mask is to put it at the top of the layer stack. Go to the Channels panel, Cmd/Ctrl-click on any channel you want to make a selection from, then you can make an alpha for each one. If you select the red channel, it will automatically create a selection on the car body. Invert this selection by going to Select>Inverse. Go to the Layers panel and hide the RGB mask by clicking on the eye icon. Go to the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, click on its mask and make sure that the background colour is black. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+Backspace.

## QUICK TIP

With the render passes, you can easily make major changes to your images after rendering them. For example, we used them in this tutorial to change the colour of the car without changing the reflection or refraction colours.

“The render passes are very important. They give you a great amount of control after the rendering process, especially if you work in 32bit”

**09 | DARKEN JUST THE WHEELS**  
Show the RGB layer mask from the Layers panel, then go to the Channels panel and Cmd/Ctrl-click on the green channel. Then hide the RGB mask again and create an Exposure adjustment layer right underneath the Occlusion layer and lower the Gamma value to 0.8

## 10 | ADD THE LIGHT BURST TO THE HEADLIGHTS

You can paint with a bright colour on the headlight to create an optical flare, or you can just use the one that I made provided on FileSilo. Drag and drop the light burst file onto the scene and make sure that you put it on the top of the stacking order by going to Layer>Arrange>Bring to Front, then scale it and position it on the car headlights. Duplicate it to the other one by Opt/Alt-clicking and change its blend mode to Add using the drop-down in the Layers panel.



**001 | Prepare the background**  
Set the background to 32 bit and adjust its colour and intensity

**002 | Import the passes**  
Combine the render passes in Photoshop and change the blend mode to Add

**003 | RGB mask**  
Use the RGB mask to easily make adjustments to certain areas of the image

## 11 | ADD GLOW TO THE CAR

In reality, any specular or highlight reflection has some glow in it. In order to make this glow on the car, duplicate the Specular and Reflection passes by selecting them from the Layers panel, then go to Layer>Duplicate Layer and press OK. Release them from the clipping mask by going to Layer>Release Clipping Mask, then drag them from the Layers

panel just underneath the Occlusion Shadow layer. Some of the layers will be out of the clipping mask, so you have to bring them back in again. Merge the duplicated layers by selecting them in the Layers panel and go to Layer>Merge Layers, blur them using Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur at 3 pixels, then change the blend mode to Add.

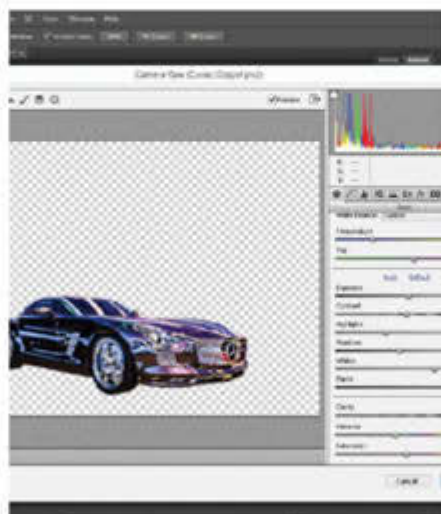


## MATCH UP THE ELEMENTS

### CONVERT THE PASSES INTO SMART OBJECTS AND COLOUR-CORRECT



**12 NON-DESTRUCTIVE EDITING**  
Select the car layers from the Layers panel except the Ground Shadow and Occlusion, then Ctrl/right-click and select Convert to Smart Object. This will make them non-destructive, but you still can edit them by double-clicking on the layer. It will open in another document. Here you can edit and save and it will automatically update in your main file. All the filters can be applied onto the Smart Object without affecting any layers.

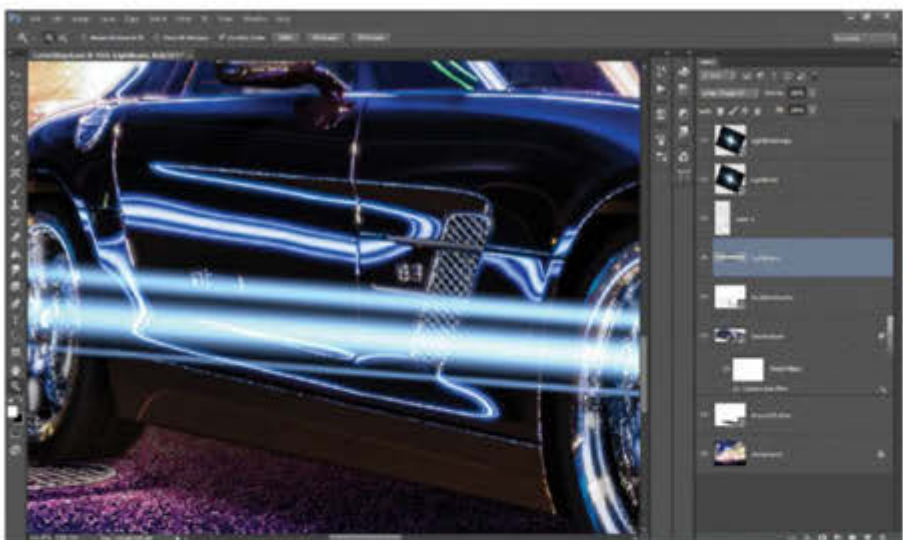


**13 COLOUR-CORRECT THE CAR**  
By converting the car layers to Smart Objects, you can now apply any of your filters to it, so go to Filter>Camera Raw. The purpose here is to make the car glow even further and match the stylised look you are seeking. To replicate this, use these values: Temperature 4600, Tint 10, Exposure +0.25, contrast 0, Highlights -30, Shadows -10, Whites +39, Blacks +95, Clarity +59, Vibrance -17, Saturation 0.



## 14 COLOUR-CORRECT THE BACKGROUND AND ADD MOTION BLUR

Go to the Layers panel and select the background, then go to Filter>Camera Raw. The objective here is to create the stylised silvery look you are after, so reduce the saturation quite a bit. My values were: Temperature 600, Tint 10, Exposure +0.25, Contrast 0, Highlights -30, Shadows -10, Whites +39, Blacks +95, Clarity +59, Vibrance -17, and Saturation 0. Then go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and try to find the vanishing point of the scene. Use an Amount of 15, with Method set to Zoom and Quality to Best.



**15 ADD LIGHT BEAMS IN FRONT OF THE CAR**  
Because you are working in 32 bit, you can define the colour intensity from the colour picker, which will make a nice glow effect. Select the Brush tool from the toolbar with a normal soft circular brush. Go to foreground colour and choose any colour you think will fit with the scene. The important thing is to

increase the Intensity value up to 8. My values were R 43, G 96, and B 191. Create a new layer by going to Layer>New>Layer, then create three dots of different sizes in the middle of the document. Go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur and choose an Angle that matches the perspective of the image. Then press Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform it in front of your car and change the blending mode to Add.



## WHY DO WE HAVE TO CLIP THE LAYERS?

In some images you may notice that the edge of the composited image has a dark outline. This can happen if the 3D element has been rendered on a black background. However, in this case I rendered it on the same background that I composited on. You can also use another method called light wrap. The core of the light wrap is to take the background and put it over the edge of the composited element. There are a lot of tutorials online to help you – just search for 'light wrap compositing'.

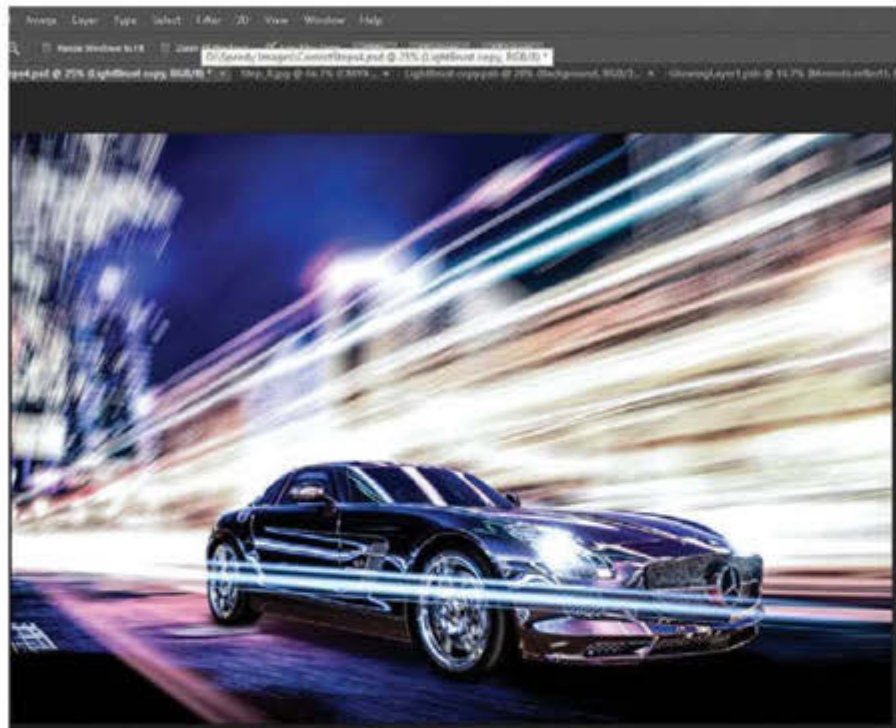
## FINAL TOUCHES

### ADD THE LIGHT BEAM AND LAST DETAILS



## 16 CREATE THE LIGHT BEAM

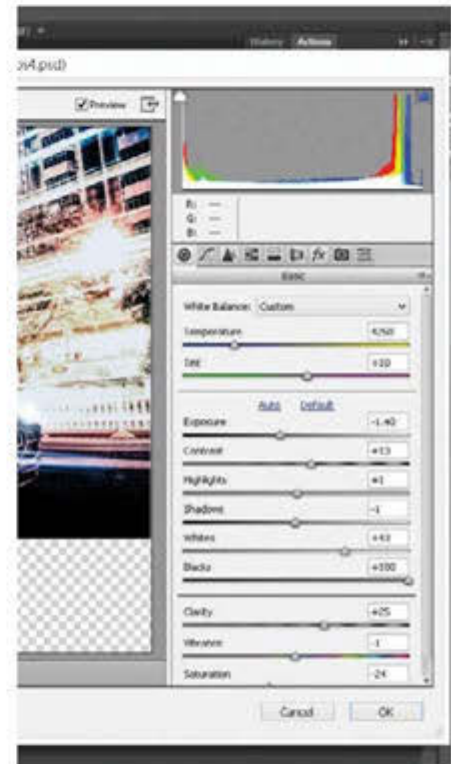
Select the Brush tool with a normal soft circular brush. Again, choose an appropriate foreground colour and set the Intensity to 8. This time my values were R 95, G 96, and B 60. Then create a new layer by going to Layer>New>Layer and create three dots of different sizes in the bottom-left corner of the scene, specifically at the vanishing point. Then go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur. Try to find a point that matches the vanishing point of the scene and use an Amount of 100, Zoom blur method and Best quality. You may need to repeat this a few times until you get the desired length.



## 18 ADD THE FINAL TOUCH

A slow shutter speed will create nice blur in the background. To mimic this, go to Filter>Blur>Radial Blur and enter a very low amount of blur. You also have to convert it to 8 bits, so go to Image>Mode>8 Bits/Channel. You will then have to colour-correct it, so go to Filter>Camera Raw and set Temperature at -14, Tint +1, Exposure -0.65, Contrast +23, Highlights +25, Shadows +23, Whites +23, Blacks -13, Clarity +31, Vibrance +17, and Saturation -28.

“ You can paint with a bright colour on the headlight to create an optical flare, or you can just use the one provided on FileSilo ”



## 17 WRAP THE WHOLE IMAGE

One of the major steps you will have to do every time you composite a 3D element with photography is to add colour correction or a photo filter on the whole image because it will blend all the elements together. To do this, select all the layers together. To do this, select all the layers from the Layers panel and Ctrl/right-click to convert them to a Smart Object. Then go to Filter>Camera Raw and enter the following values: Temperature 4250, Tint 10, Exposure -1.40, contrast +13, Highlights +1, Shadows -1, Whites +43, Blacks +100, Clarity +25, Vibrance -1, and Saturation -24.

### QUICK TIP

You can also use the ZDepth pass provided on FileSilo to add depth of field to the image. Add the ZDepth into the channel as an alpha and use the Lens Blur filter to create the depth of field.



# MAKE PRO SELECTIONS

CREATE A DYNAMIC ROOFTOP BASKETBALL COURT WITH A BEAUTIFUL SKYLINE THAT COMBINES AMAZING COLOURS

**P**ut your newfound knowledge of selections into practice with this tutorial. In it, you will work with a 3D model to create a scene on the rooftop of a city building. You will learn how to cut out and manipulate various stock images and composite them onto a sunset background. You'll use the perspective of the city to place your

court in between the surrounding buildings. Photoshop is really important for this piece because it allows you to integrate 3D renders with stock photos perfectly. This creates a magical and killer visual style for the final image. Because this piece is for **Advanced Photoshop**, we created the court in 3D with an Adobe flair to make it even more special.

## CUT AND PASTE

MASTER SELECTIONS TO CREATE THE BASE

**01 | BEGIN THE COMPOSITION** Open a new document (Cmd/Ctrl+N), then grab the 3D image provided on FileSilo ('court\_3d.psd'). Place it in the document on top of your background (download Shutterstock image 117587224 for this). The important thing is to define the location of your light source so it follows the perspective. That way you can build the rest of the scene with the perfect angle and light.



**02 | ADD MORE BUILDINGS** Cut out the secondary buildings ('secondary\_buildings.jpg') using the Path tool. This tool allows you to cut specific buildings, complete the first mask and then go back to the mask to add more details and integrate the two photos. When done, use a brush at 20% and paint inside your mask using the selection that you made before. This way you can isolate it and just paint in the area that you want to integrate. To invert your selection, hit Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I. Duplicate this layer and set your blend mode to Multiply at 28%, duplicate again and desaturate the image. This time, set it to Multiply at 24%.



### OUR EXPERTS

**HUGO CENEVIVA AND  
HENRIQUE CASSAB**  
[www.elevendy.com](http://www.elevendy.com)

Elevendy is a California-based creative support studio, passionate about retouching and integrating 3D and photographs in order to create amazing images.

### SOURCE FILES

On [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609), you will find source files needed to re-create the tutorial. You will also need to download some from Shutterstock. ID numbers have been provided.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM BLOCKING TO INTEGRATED



Progress 1: Select the images



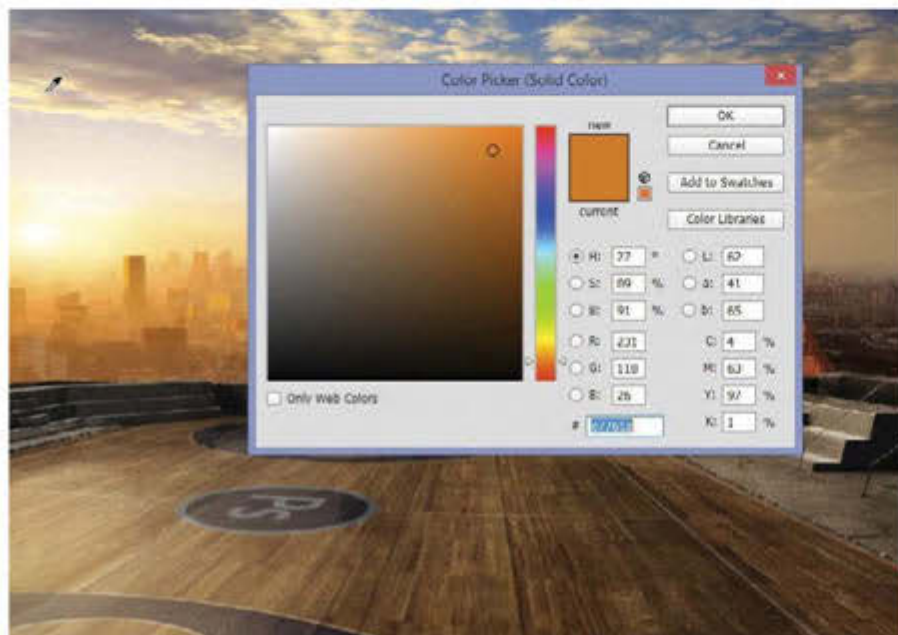
Progress 2: Retouch the scene



Progress 3: Final colour grading

## 03 INTEGRATE THE COLOURS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Now that you have the secondary building in place, you're ready to use some colour layers to integrate and make the transition between the images perfect. Use orange with your blend mode set to Overlay at 42% and paint in areas to create the haze between the buildings. This will make them more integrated. Then grab the same orange and create a gradient to increase the power of the sun. Use 42% in Overlay. Now, to balance the image, use blue to paint in the shadows on the building. Use warm tones for the light-affected areas and cool tones for the shaded areas to better mimic reality.



## 04 CHANGE THE CONTRAST

Now that you have your secondary building, you need to lower the contrast on the background in order to shift the focus to your main characters at the front. Add a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer and set Brightness at 0 and Contrast -13 to get the result close to a haze, then use the mask to mark just the area you want to isolate. Do the same thing with a Levels layer with Output Levels at 30 and 255 to get a better result on your haze.



## 05 PLACE THE REST OF THE BUILDINGS

Download images 121577989 and 6061234 from Shutterstock to add into the left side of the scene. Cut out the main building from 121577989, add a mask and repeat the process with 6061234. Duplicate the layer, putting it behind your first building. You'll use this one to create some detail using the Multiply blend mode. Press Cmd/Ctrl+L to open the Levels, then select the white eyedropper, go to your image and click on the sky area (in blue). This way when you turn on Multiply, everything that is white will disappear and you will have the effect that you need.



## 06 COLOUR AND CONTRAST

Now it's time to add some colour and contrast to the buildings. Use the orange that you used for the secondary buildings and set Overlay blending mode at 34%. This will give you a warm tone for your building. Add a black and white layer on Multiply (this will make your image darker) and set it at 33% for a nice result without being too dark.

**QUICK TIP**

When trying to better integrate multiple images in a concept like this, make sure that you select the parts that need to have the same colour and contrast, leaving the contrast stronger in the foreground. You can use different types of selections to do this. Our favourite to use is the Quick Mask tool because it's really fast for this type of job.

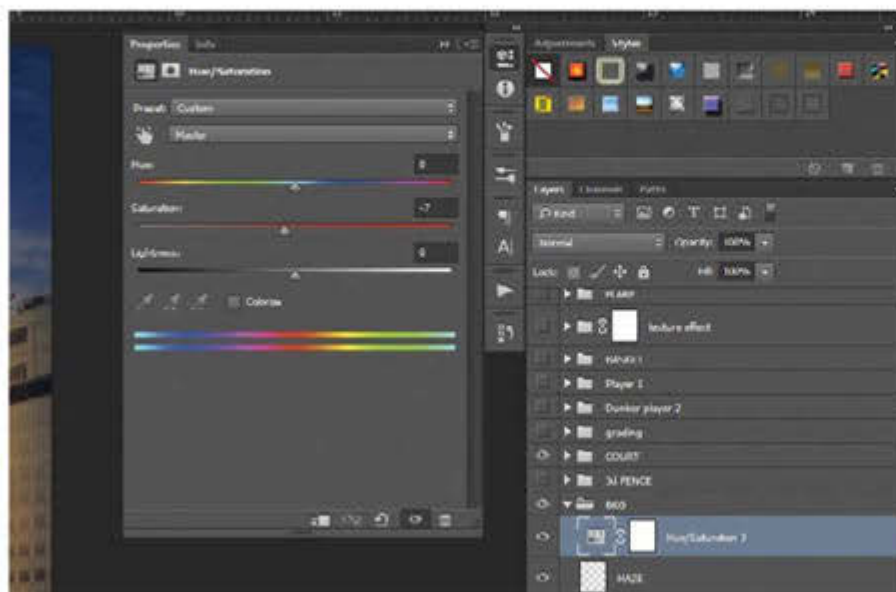
“It's always nice to add as much detail as you can in a scene like this. Try to follow reality and remember you can always create your assets with textures and scratches. This way you can have a rich scene with a lot of cool visual tricks inside, and make the audience look and see your scene in a different way every time”

**07 FINISHING THE CITY**

Now you need to do the same thing for the right side. Download image 17880268. Cut this photo using the Path tool, then press Cmd/Ctrl+Enter to make the selection. Then add a mask and isolate the part that you are going to use. Do the same retouching as before, and use a Black & White layer on Multiply to make the building darker and to create the shadows made by the sunlight. Again, use the orange colour in Overlay at 100% to match the light and reflection of the sun on the buildings. To finish, select the blue colour that you already used for the shadow areas and use it again to match the light in all buildings precisely.

**08 FINAL HAZE AND ATMOSPHERE**

Now that you have the additional buildings, you need to add a little bit more haze to integrate the image even more. Use the eyedropper tool to select an area in your image that has some haze and use this colour in a brush at 10%, then paint over the areas to create the haze. After you do this, create a Hue/Saturation layer and set it at -7. This way all this area will be less bright and when you put the players in this it will make sense.

**09 3D FENCE**

Grab image 66243394 from Shutterstock and use the scale to match the same size of the court. Then use the mask to clean some areas that you don't want to show. To do this quickly, press B + Q to activate the Quick Mask, then paint the areas that you want to hide. They will appear in red. Then press Q again and a selection will be made where you painted in red. Set your layer to Multiply at 51%, which will help the fence match better in the comp.



## DOWN TO DETAILS

CUT OUT AND COMPOSITE THE HOOP AND THE PLAYER

### 10 RETOUCH THE COURT

Now it's time to create the light and colour on your 3D court. Remember to match the light and shadow direction of the light source to get the best result. Using Color Balance, create a mask to increase the blue in the shaded areas, and use a Curves layer to get a warm colour on the light areas. To refine your retouching, use a brush in Overlay at 10% white (on the light areas) and a black brush in Soft Light (on the dark areas). Remember to follow the sunlight to retouch the scene.



#### 001 LIGHT AREAS

To add the light, you need to paint over the layer using white in Overlay at 10%. This way you can naturally increase the sunlight without burning out the whole scene.

#### 002 DARK AREAS

Use a black brush at 10% Soft Light to paint these areas. Remember that when a building blocks the sun, the shadow created is typically colder and darker.

#### 003 COOL THE SHADOWS

Using Color Balance, you can reach a result pretty similar to reality. You just have to be careful to balance the cold and hot areas in the light and shaded areas. Always be soft so you don't overdo it.



### 12 WARM GLOW

Once you have done this, duplicate a layer and set it to Multiply blend mode to increase the shaded areas a little bit. Set it at 100% with total desaturation, and then duplicate again and set to Soft Light to increase the contrast a little bit more. To finish this area, use a colour layer in yellow to create the warm light coming from the sun and hitting the rim of the basket.



### 13 TEXTURE EFFECTS ON THE ACRYLIC BACKBOARD

Select layers with scratches and light reflection to match the acrylic textures provided on the disc. Use the layer on Screen mode to just show the light areas, and then mask to make a soft effect. Add some orange again because the light is coming directly from the sun, and the colour always reflects on acrylic. To create a nice touch on the scene, use a flare asset ('flare.jpg') set to Screen combined with the same orange colour to create a realistic effect. Use the mask to decrease the reflection area.



### 11 CUT OUT THE HOOP

You now need to add in the 3D hoop ('basket.psd'). To cut out the basket, use the Magic Wand tool. Select the white area, go to the Menu> Select>Similar, and you will see that all the white is now selected. Click on the mask button and make your selection perfectly. Now repeat the same process with the other part of the basket. Select the white area with the Magic Wand tool, go to Menu> Select>Similar and click on the mask button.

“Always remember to follow the light source of your scene to create a nice and realistic retouch”



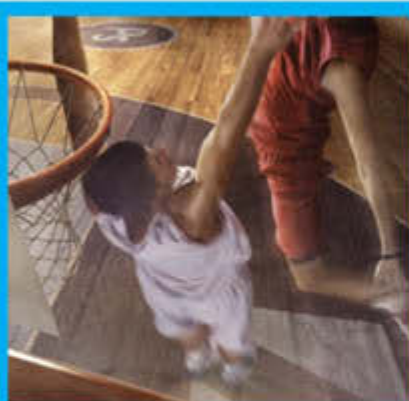
### 14 ADD THE FIRST PLAYER

Cut out and place the player from Shutterstock 150243944. Use a Black & White adjustment and a black brush set to Soft Light to paint the dark areas of your character. For the light areas, use Overlay in white colour at 10%. Always combine with the orange that you used for the rest of the comp. Then use Path Blur to create the feeling of motion (this is a really cool new blur option in CC 2014). You can choose the direction of the blur and then use masks to fix any weird areas while making the blur softer.

## FINAL ADJUSTMENTS

CORRECT THE COLOURS AND VAMP UP THE VIBRANCY

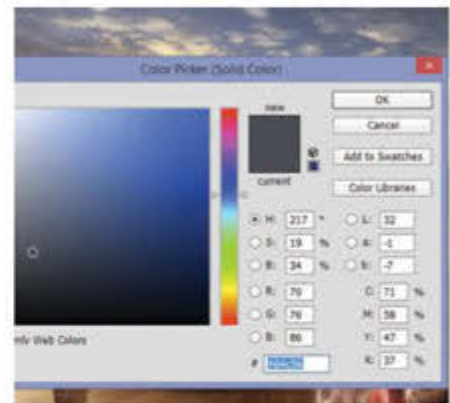
**15** **PLAYER 2 – DEFENCE!**  
For this part, you will do the same as you did with the other player, taking extra care to note that the light is different on him. Repeat the process you used on the first player with the central player in Shutterstock 149820047. Make it darker and with a blue colour on the shaded areas and a warmer colour on the light areas. Add more details using a black brush in Soft Light. Once you've finished the retouching, duplicate the layer and apply the same Path Blur you used before to match the scene.



### DETAILS

It's always nice to add as much detail as you can in a scene like this. Try to follow reality and remember you can always create your assets with textures and scratches. This way you can have a rich scene with a lot of cool visual tricks inside, and make the audience look and see your scene in a different way every time.

**16** **COLOUR ADJUSTMENT**  
Slowly increase the orange near the clouds in the sky. Use the same orange that you used before, set on 32% and mask to put orange only in the right areas. Then create a Color Balance adjustment layer and increase the blue, cyan, and red to make the colour a little more dramatic. After this, add blue to the sky. Grab your eyedropper and sample the colour of the nicest blue in the sky. Set your blend mode to Color at 68% and mask around the yellow and orange areas.



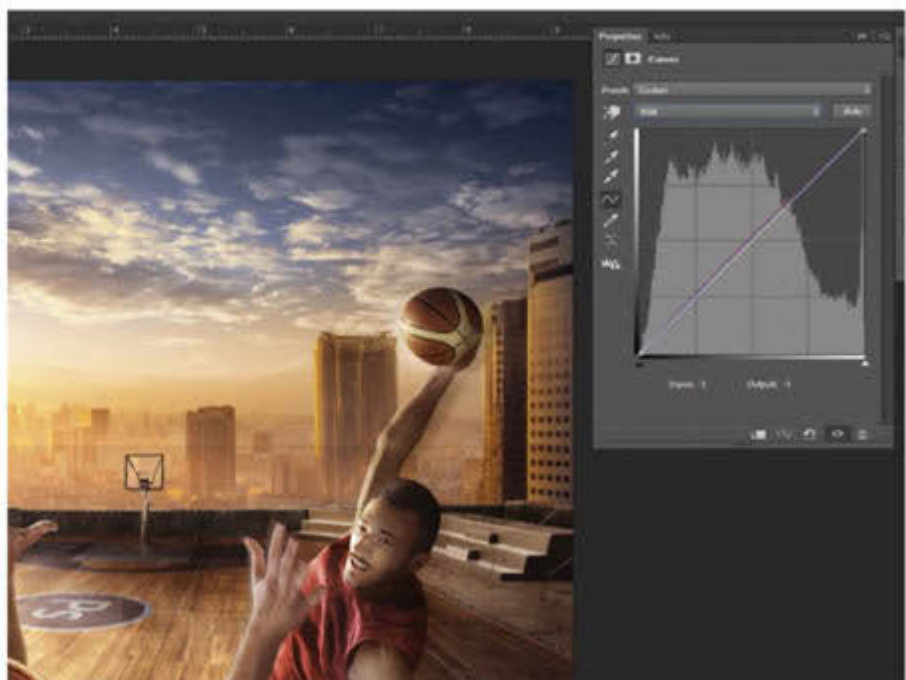
**17** **FINAL ADJUSTMENTS**  
Duplicate the whole scene, flatten and take the saturation off. This way you can see the dark areas and the light areas, and use the contrast to increase a little bit more. I used 0 and 9 on this one with legacy. Then put this layer on Luminosity 50% to get a nice result. Add an Add Noise filter with 5% in Overlay with Monochromatic ticked to create a little bit of noise and integrate the entire scene a bit more evenly. Your last touch will be the grading. Add an Exposure adjustment layer to direct the light and make it a little bit lighter, to guide the eyes of the viewer into your scene.



### QUICK TIP

You can always use the grading technique to direct the eyes and follow the light source in your scene. Remember to always do a nice mask with the edges blurred so you have a more natural effect.

**18** **FINAL COLOR STEP**  
Now you need to do some minor colour adjustments in order to bolster the main colours, red and blue. Click on the Curves adjustment layer and open your curve. Click on the RGB mode in the curve, open the Red channel and push to increase the red slightly. Now open the Blue and increase the blue area just a little bit. To finish the process, put on 50% to make the colour correction soft to follow reality. Now you know all the steps to do this tutorial, have fun!





OUR EXPERT

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[www.zulusplitter.de](http://www.zulusplitter.de)

Rudolph is a digital matte painter and concept artist, and has worked on projects like *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, *Jupiter Ascending*, *Captain America 2* and *Divergent*.

SOURCE FILES

On [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609), you will find the full-size 3D render and all the passes needed to complete this tutorial.

# DESIGN AN EPIC FANTASY LANDSCAPE

COMBINE PHOTO ELEMENTS AND PAINTING TECHNIQUES TO CREATE PHOTOREAL CONCEPT ART

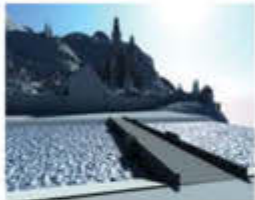
**L**earn how to use a 3D block mesh, photo bashing and digital painting techniques to create an epic fantasy kingdom scene. The combination of Maya and the renderer Chaos Group V-Ray will help you to set up the perspective and basic lighting for the final scene. The use of photos will help you to create the first details for the

image and generate a photoreal touch. You will then use digital painting techniques to match, merge and change the photos to the way you want them, which will help you to create a final concept.

This is an advanced Photoshop tutorial, for artists who have a bit more experience with this program or someone who wants to push their skills to a new

level. You will be using photos to make up most of the base, which you can find on the web. Here, stock sites like CGTextures, Texturepilot or deviantART were used. Shop around to find images to suit your own scene. On [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) you will find the 3D render and all passes. When you have these downloaded, you're ready to begin.

## WORK IN PROGRESS THE PHOTOREAL CONCEPT



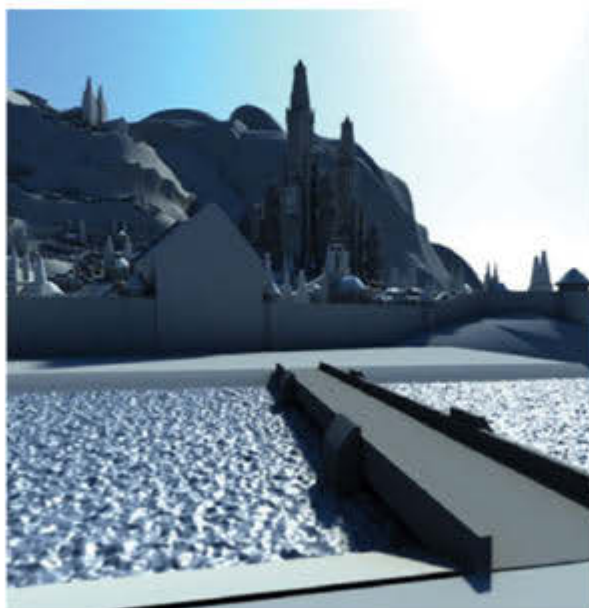
Progress 1: From 3D to 2D



Progress 2: Using the photo bashing technique

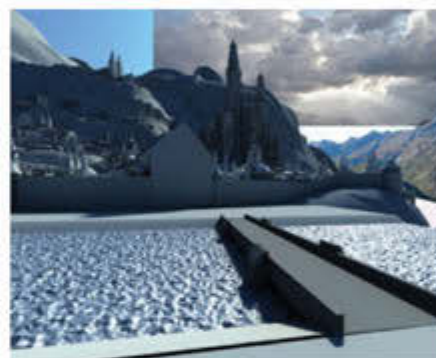


Progress 3: Painting on top



### 01 3D BLOCK SKETCH

Create a new document with a size of 5661 x 3669 pixels and 300dpi. You will start by using a 3D render. The 3D render was created with Autodesk Maya and V-Ray. You can use other 3D programs and renderers to create a similar image, like CINEMA 4D or Google SketchUp. The 3D mesh will help to give you the basic composition, perspective and lighting for the scene. For this painting, the 3D part was completed in around two to three hours. Render out different passes like Diffuse or RGB.



### 02 FIRST PHOTOBASH

The next step is the background. For a better overview, create a group by clicking the group icon in the Layers panel. To browse the photos you want to use in the image, the best way is to use Adobe Bridge or Adobe Mini Bridge. To activate the Mini Bridge, go to File>Browse in Mini Bridge. When you find the right images for the background, double-click on the thumbnail in Mini Bridge to open them. Use the Move tool to move the image into your PSD file.

“The 3D mesh will help to give you the basic composition, perspective and lighting for the scene”



### 03 EXTEND THE PHOTOS

The next stage is the extension of photo elements by copying the images and painting on top of them. Duplicate the sky image with Cmd/Ctrl+J and put it under the original sky. Then use the Move tool to move it to the right. Make another copy and move it down. After that, merge the sky layers together and use the Brush tool with a chalk brush to paint a seamless edge between all the sky parts.

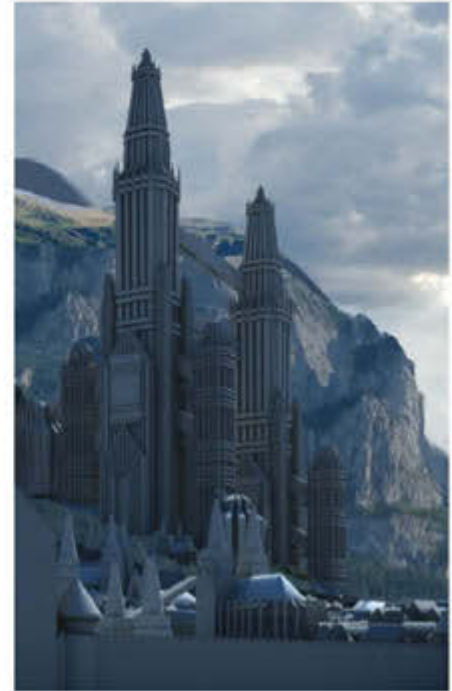


### 04 MATCH THE ELEMENTS

Now it's time to match the mountain with the sky. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+B for Color Balance to match the colours. Select Shadows and add a bit of cyan to the mountain. Press OK and open the Hue/Saturation dialog with Cmd/Ctrl+U. Go to the cyan and blue channel and pull down the Saturation. Create a new layer behind the mountain layer. Use the Lasso tool to make a shape for the distant mountains. Pick a shadow colour from the mountain and fill the selection with this colour.

**QUICK TIP**

If you want to select a part of a reference image you picked for the painting, use the Quick Selection tool to create a fast and accurate selection. Sometimes the Quick Selection tool creates better results than Color Range selection or the Magic Wand tool.



**05 | ADD THE WATERFALLS**

Other than the sun rays, the background needs another interesting element – the waterfalls. To create these, use two different waterfall images. To paint the shapes of the waterfalls, create a layer mask by clicking on the layer mask icon in the Layers panel and paint with the round brush in black to change the shape. It's important to look at the size of the trees – the waterfalls shouldn't be bigger than the trees on the mountain. After that, match the colours again with Color Balance.

**06 | OVERPAINT THE WATERFALLS**

Now you need to match the waterfall size by painting on top of the waterfall. Create a new layer on top of the waterfall layer and use a chalk brush. Pick a dark colour from a nearby area and just paint some lines on the waterfall. Then add some smaller islands and stones. Go to Image>Image Rotate>Flip Horizontal to have a fresh eye and check the perspective and scale. Create a new layer and set it to Lighten. Pick the sun colour and paint some highlights over the waterfall where the light hits.

**07 | THE MIDDLE BACKGROUND MOUNTAIN**

Now you can repeat the same techniques as used in the steps before. Try to match the shape of the 3D render to the scene as much as possible, as well as the lighting direction. Create a new group and call it something like 'midground mountain'. Import the images into your Photoshop file and place them by using the Move tool. Then create a layer mask for every image you want to add and paint the shapes. Here, tree images were used to create a base for the mountain.



**08 | OVERPAINT THE MOUNTAIN**

The next step is another overpaint and colour matching. You need to match the grassy top and the forest to the rocky mountain image. To match the colours, use the Match Color adjustment. Go to Image>Adjustments>Match Color. Select the PSD file as a source and the layer you want to match this layer. After you have done this, create a new layer for the overpaint and paint the edges between the images, as well as painting in some trees on the light side of the mountain.



**09 | PAINT THE SNOWY DISTANT MOUNTAINS**

Flip the image again to get a fresh eye. Create a new group. Use the 3D part as a base, but extend the shape a bit more with the Lasso tool. Import a snowy mountain and put it into the PSD file. Use Color Balance to match the colours. When you have done this, create a new layer over the mountain. This layer will be a cloud layer. Use the Brush tool and a cloud brush. Pick a cloudy colour from the sky layer and paint the clouds.

## 10 MIDGROUND MOUNTAIN

Create another new layer. Select the part of the mountain you want to add details to with the Lasso and click on the mask icon in the Layers panel. Now the group must have the mask in nearly the same shape as the mountain. Import some more grassy mountain images. Here just two different ones were copied and moved around so that they did not look like duplicates of each other. Create a mask for every image and paint some areas away if it ever starts to look too similar.



### QUICK TIP

When you work with 3D, be sure to render out as many passes as possible, including Diffuse, Ambient Occlusion, and shadow and light passes. You can then combine these passes with the layer blending methods in Photoshop, like Multiply, Darken and Lighten.



## 11 PAINT THE SUN AND SKY

Create a new layer inside the mountain group. Pick the colour of the darker cloud and change the layer mode to Multiply. Fill the layer with the colour and paint the elements away on the mask where the sun hits the mountain. After, create a new group with a mask. Inside this group, add a Color Balance adjustment and match the light side of the mountain with the sun colour. Then create a new layer in Lighten mode, picking the sun colour, and paint the sunny side of the mountain.



## 12 FINAL DETAILS OF THE MOUNTAIN

Here, some rocky parts of the mountain didn't match the buildings and smaller cathedrals. Create a new layer on top of the latest layers you created. Pick a colour from the rocks and start painting on some rocks near the buildings to create something like platforms that the buildings are built on. Be sure to repaint as much as possible, like the existing rocks. Use a chalk brush with a texture for this part. The result should show nearly no difference between the original rocks.



### 13 MOUNTAIN, CLOUDS AND FOREGROUND

Look for some cloudy mountains. Use the Quick Selection tool to select the cloud and move it into the PSD. Match the colours with Color Balance. Move one cloud on top of the mountain group and one behind. Paint in some details on the top cathedral. For the foreground, use three images for the water and two for the riverside in front of the gate and copy them three times. Merge the images again by painting on top of it. The colours are matched with Color Balance.



### 14 MAIN CATHEDRAL, GATE AND RIVERSIDE

Create a new group. Select the main cathedral and make a layer mask out of it. Use cathedral textures to add some basic details and paint on top of it. Do the same with the bridge and the wall. For these elements, just use some old stone textures you can find at CGTextures or Texturepilot. Copy the image from the riverside on the left and put it between the tree images you added before. For the tree, use just one image and paint on top of every layer to create randomness.



### 15 FINAL STEP

Now add some textures to the remaining parts. Create a new layer and paint some city smoke with a cloud brush. Use a knight image, scale it and paint on top of it to create some randomness. Then create another new layer, pick the sun colour and paint all the sunny parts with a soft brush to create a moody feeling. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E to create a master copy. Then go to Filter>Blur> Gaussian Blur set 4%. Change the layer mode to Lighten at 75%. Done.



#### OUR EXPERT

**BRANDON CAWOOD**  
[www.brandoncawood.com](http://www.brandoncawood.com)  
[@Brandon\\_Cawood](https://twitter.com/Brandon_Cawood)

Brandon Cawood is a commercial and advertising photographer from Georgia, USA. He specialises in high-energy composites and does his own retouching and Photoshop work.

#### SOURCE FILES

Check out the tutorial files online at [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) for images to try this manipulation out for yourself. The other image is from <http://tinyurl.com/mw63jow> and the fog texture package is from [phlearn.com](http://phlearn.com).

# CREATE SCI-FI CITYSCAPES

LEARN TO COMBINE CITYSCAPE ELEMENTS WITH RURAL LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS TO CREATE A FUTURISTIC BLADE RUNNER-STYLE SCENE

**M**any of us long for the challenge of creating a world that only exists in the mind of the creative. This tutorial outlines the basic techniques to reach that desired outcome, but will take a good deal of experimentation and trial and error to get it just right. It is for those with a solid foundation and

understanding of adjustment layers, blending modes and masking techniques. The idea here is to take multiple elements from different landscape images and create something that only exists in the imagination. For this particular image, you will be creating a futuristic cityscape emerging from a rural sunset scene. This image is very much inspired by

the movie *Blade Runner* and other movies of its kind. Lighting effects and atmosphere play a huge role in the mood and feel of this image. Follow along with the tutorial as it guides you through the basic principles of each step. Hopefully this will inspire you to create worlds of your own, and maybe you will even learn something new!



## WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM RURAL TO FUTURISTIC



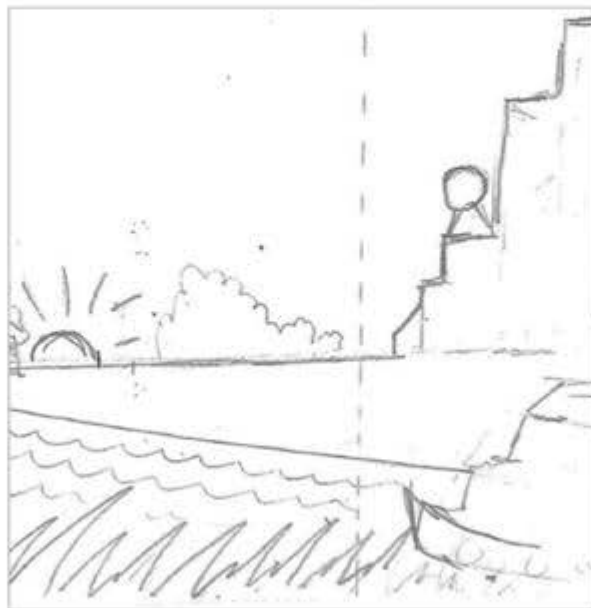
Progress 1: Place your elements



Progress 2: Masking and perspective



Progress 3: Add light effects



## 01 CONCEPT AND GATHER

When trying to pull off any photomaniipulation, proper planning is essential. Planning gives you a starting point. A simple sketch is all you need. Having a sketch will allow you to explain your vision to your talent or client and allow you to remember all your brainstorming ideas. Think about the angle, the perspective, where the light is coming from, and any other details you want to remember. It doesn't have to be a work of art. Once you have a concept, you can gather the elements for your image.



## 02 PLACEMENT

To get an idea of whether your concept is going to work the way you have planned, you can do a quick mock-up. For this step, take all of your elements and place them in their intended places on separate layers. It may be necessary to do some quick masking so you can see layers underneath each other. Try to line up the horizons of each image if possible. Make sure you use a layer mask on each layer. You don't want to permanently erase something you may need later.

“You don't want to use an aerial city shot with one taken from a low angle. The perspectives won't match”



## 03 PERSPECTIVE

If you are using stock images or images taken at different times, the perspective on each image may be different. You want to use images that have similar visual perspectives. You don't want to use an aerial city shot with one taken from a low angle, as the perspectives won't match. You can adjust perspectives that are slightly off by going to Edit>Transform>Perspective. By clicking and dragging on the corners, it will adjust the perspective of the photo. There are several perspective tutorials online for more detailed information on this technique.



## 04 MASKING, CLONING AND CURVES

When you are working with landscapes, use the natural lines to your advantage. Try masking things in and out on the horizon. It is always a good idea to do any cloning on a separate layer in case you make a mistake. Use Curves adjustment layers clipped to your layers to adjust the colour temperature and exposure of each element so that they blend with each other. You can also use Levels adjustments to add shadows and highlights to make sure they all match within the final image.



## 05 BILLBOARDS

By using a photo that already has signage, you already have a template to place your billboard images. Paste your image in a layer above the underlying signage. Go to Edit>Transform>Distort. Now you can place each corner of the image on top of the corners of the underlying billboard. Be sure to use portrait crops on tall billboards and landscape crops on long billboards. If there happens to be a curve around a corner, like this image, while still in Transform mode, Ctrl/right-click and select Warp. Warping will allow you to curve the edges where you need to.

**QUICK TIP**

Make sure you save your project often. This will keep you from losing hours of valuable time on a project. If you get to a point where you want to try something that may or may not work, save your document first. Then click File>Save As and name it something else. This way you aren't working on the original file and can always go back to it later.

**06 | ATMOSPHERE**

A good way to give a composite like this one some depth is to create some atmosphere. To do this, establish a foreground, midground and background. You can use an image of fog on a black background to create the atmosphere. Be sure to change the blending mode to Screen. You can adjust how thick the fog is by using a Levels adjustment layer. Make sure the adjustment layer is clipped only to the fog layer so it doesn't affect the rest of the image. Place varying amounts of fog in the foreground, midground and background for a more realistic look.

**07 | FLYING CARS**

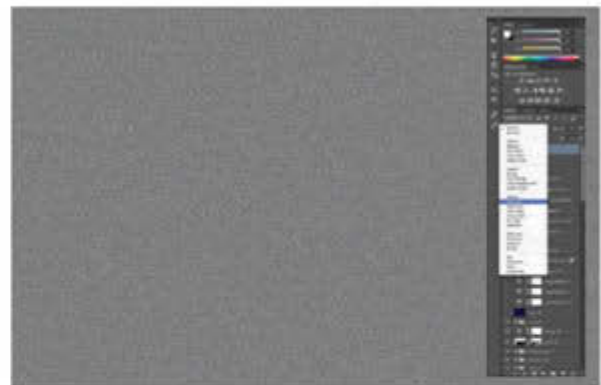
The flying cars in this image are very simple. Because they will have so many lighting effects added to them, they don't have to be super detailed. You can create the basic shape and colours with the Brush tool and then use the Smudge tool to blend them together. Be sure to put light colours anywhere a lighting effect will be added. You can duplicate the layer when you are done and change the scale to create multiple cars by hitting Cmd/Ctrl+T to transform. Be sure to hold Shift while you drag a corner in or out to keep the dimensions the same.

**08 | LIGHTING EFFECTS AND NEON**

Adding lighting effects not only enhances the image but also helps blend all the elements together. Photoshop has built-in flare effects and there are also third-party plug-ins. For the neons, make your lines with a white hard brush and then go to Layer>Layer Style>Blending Options. Select outer glow and inner glow. Set the blending mode of both to Screen and adjust the size and spread as needed. Also choose a rounded contour. Clip a Hue/Saturation layer to your neon layer to change the colour of the neon. Select Colorize and use the Hue and Saturation sliders to get your desired colour.

**09 | COLOUR GRADING**

Add a Color Balance adjustment layer. The colour balance adjustments will vary from image to image, so play around with them to get the look you want. For this image, the shadows and midtones were pushed towards the cyan and green tones to create teal, while the highlights were pushed towards the red and yellow tones to create orangey yellow. Sometimes, using a Color Balance adjustment on top of another Color Balance adjustment can give you different looks. Just don't push it too far or you will risk losing details in your image.

**10 | ADD GRAIN FOR BLENDING**

Lastly, add grain. Create a new layer above your sharpened image. Hold down Shift and hit Delete. Choose 'Fill with 50% gray'. Change the blending mode of this layer to Soft Light. Next, select Filter>Noise>Add Noise. The size of your image will determine the Amount you use. Choose Uniform and leave Monochromatic unselected. Once you apply, hold down Cmd/Ctrl+U, then pull down the Saturation to -85%. Leaving a little colour in the grain will make it look more natural. Be sure to do this step at 100% zoom. You can adjust the Opacity if it feels like it's too much. Save your PSD.

# 3D & PHOTOSHOP

Discover what Photoshop Creative Cloud can offer in terms of 3D tools, and have a go at creating some cool composites

## **058** Transform 3D renders

Bring your 3D render to life using Photoshop tricks and matte painting techniques

## **064** Construct 3D type

Learn how to merge urbanism and typography to capture the euphoria of being in a city

## **070** Excel in expert blending

Transform a flat 3D render into a realistic illustration using pro techniques

## **076** Create pro key art

Learn how to create an epic videogame key art to capture your audience



“Photos are the best way  
to mend clumsy  
parts of a 3D  
render and bring a  
touch of realism”

PAGE  
**064**



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**076**



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**058**





CLIENT: DEFENDING RUSSIA, AGENCY: DESIGN MEDIA

# TRANSFORM 3D RENDERS

BRING YOUR 3D RENDER TO LIFE USING PHOTOSHOP TRICKS AND MATTE PAINTING TECHNIQUES

**N**owadays it's hard to be a Photoshop artist and not use 3D at all, just as it is to be a 3D artist and not use Photoshop. The most modern techniques overlap different branches of computer graphics, creating images like never seen before. Over the following pages, you will see that 3D post-production isn't harder than the usual compositing techniques that you are used to. It isn't a strict cookbook only teaching you how to create aeroplanes, as you can apply these methods to any type of 3D render. On the way you'll pick up some Photoshop tricks that will be helpful in many different cases.

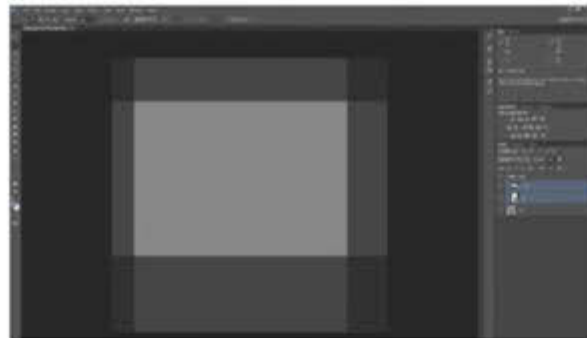
At the beginning of the tutorial you'll learn how to create a landscape background from scratch, from sketch to photo compositing and colour correction, using matte painting techniques. You will then polish a 3D render using a lot of adjustments and differently blended layers, and will discover which passes of a 3D render can be very helpful for post-production. You will then learn how to composite photos again to create a photoreal cockpit. By the end of the tutorial, you will have learnt how to easily add some special effects like a burning rocket trail and scattered particles. So don't delay, let's go!

## TAKE OFF

CREATE YOUR SCENE USING MATTE PAINTING TECHNIQUES

### 01 CREATE WORKSPACE

Create a new document at 3600 x 3600px. A square format is handy when creating multipurpose images. Make a grey background layer and a group. Name the group 'Sizes'. Create two layers at 16:9 and A4, fill them with dark grey and set their Opacities at 70%. Make rectangular holes in them sized 3600 x 2025px and 2776 x 3567px.



### 02 ROUGH SKETCH

Open the supplied 'draft-render.png' file and place it into the scene so that it looks great in both size frames. Hide the Sizes group. Now your task is to create the background of the artwork. Paint a scene using any kind of rough brush, photos and whatever else you want.



### 03 DRAFT LANDSCAPE

You now need a pile of misty photos. Go to a photo stock site and collect as many as you can. Replace the sketch with preview photos. Place them using rough masks and colour corrections. We used '25817889', '25817914', '25014376', '25013547' and '2640502' from istockphoto.com.



#### OUR EXPERT

**ANTON EGOROV**  
www.behance.net/egorov

Egorov is a self-taught CG artist living in Saint Petersburg who mixes Photoshop with 3D applications to create stunning infographics and illustrations. He is currently working worldwide as a freelancer.

#### SOURCE FILES

On [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](https://www.filesilo.co.uk/bks-609), you can find the basic 3D render files. The photos for compositing and special effects can be found [atcgtextures.com](https://www.atcgtextures.com) and [istockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com).

### WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM IDEA TO FINISHED ARTWORK



Progress 1: Create a sketch



Progress 2: Composite scene



Progress 3: Final effects



**04 | PLACE HIGH-RES PHOTOS**  
When you are happy, replace the previews with high-res images and refine the masks using brushes. Some photos will need colour correction, like '25817889'. Deepen its shadows using a Levels adjustment. Clip it to the photo and move the left slider to 37. Desaturate the photo using a new Hue/Saturation layer. Set the Hue at +3 and the Saturation at -55. Then create a Solid Color layer in Soft Light mode and choose a tan colour.



**05 | FOREGROUND**  
Choose a tree photo or download '24864654' from iStock. Replace the preview with it and improve the mask with artistic brushes, like the Rough Round Bristle brush. Create a subtle speed effect with the Motion Blur filter. Set the Angle at -6 and the Distance at 31px. Create a new clipped layer and another one beneath the photo. Use a soft brush with low opacity to brighten pieces of the landscape where it's needed, settling the pines into the scene.



**06 | COLOUR CORRECTION**  
You now need to reconcile the different photos with each other. Create a new Solid Color layer in Color mode and choose a blue-grey colour. Set the Opacity at 40%. In order to diversify the colours, create a new Curves layer. Vary the channels individually: for Red, move the bottom marker up, and for Blue, move the centre of the line down. To make the colours more natural, create a new layer in Soft Light mode. Paint with broad strokes using large soft brushes in different colours.



**07 | AERIAL PERSPECTIVE**  
In order to make the scene deeper, use aerial perspective. This means that the distant objects, especially on the horizon, are less contrasted and lighter than the foreground ones. Create a new Brightness/Contrast layer. Set the Brightness at 28 and the Contrast at -29. Clean the foreground using a large soft black brush on the mask of the layer. Create a new Levels layer and move the centre slider to the left to 1.65. Make a similar mask for it. Refine the result with other adjustment layers if it's needed.

**QUICK TIP**

When you place a new photo into a scene, convert it to a Smart Object. This way you have the possibility to re-transform it without any losses, and you can even change the Filter settings! This trick is very useful in real-life work when you always have to go back and adjust things you've already finished.



**08 | MORE FOG!**  
Go to [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com) and find the 'Smoke0403' set, then download the first photo. Create a group and place the file into it. Remove the sky, the chimney and excess smoke using a layer mask and brushes. Reduce the opacity. Create a Levels adjustment, clip it to the group and move the centre slider to 1.51 and the right to 138. Add a Solid Color layer filled with grey-blue in Soft Light mode.

## PLACE 3D RENDER

IMPORT 3D PASSES AND SETTLE THEM DOWN INTO THE SCENE



### 09 IMPORT THE RENDER

You can import your 3D render or use the supplied 'production-render.png'. The attached fighter is a stock 3D model. It was rendered using V-Ray. The landscape created before was used as a HDRI environment map for reflections. The surface of the fighter is quite matte, but this trick can be very helpful in other cases. Once you have placed the render, make a group called 'Guides' and place it above the others. Draw some perspective lines. You will be able to check against them to avoid mistakes.



### 10 AERIAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FIGHTER

The first helpful pass is ZDepth. It's a greyscale image that shows the distance from the camera. The closest objects are white and the furthest ones are black. Place 'render-ZDepth.png' into the scene. Align it with the fighter and fill the empty space with black. Invert and cut the layer. Create a Brightness/Contrast layer clipped to the fighter and paste into its mask. Brighten the furthest part and reduce their contrast. Use the same mask for a blue Solid Color layer in Soft Light mode.



### 11 COLOUR TONES AND REFLECTIONS

Colour reflections are one of the most important things to settle a stock image into a scene. Tone the fighter a bit using a clipped Solid Color layer in Soft Light mode filled with blue. Set its Opacity at 10%, then add matte colour reflections. Create a layer in Soft Light mode. Grab the Brush tool and choose a green colour. Paint the lower wing and the lower side of the cockpit with broad strokes using a large soft brush with low opacity. Pick a blue colour and paint the higher parts of the fighter.

### 12 ADDITIONAL LIGHTING

A common problem of 3D renders is their lack of imperfections, especially in lighting. So let's make the lighting of the plane more natural. Create a new clipped layer in Overlay mode. Select the Brush tool and paint shadows and highlights with a soft black and white brush. Feel free to work instinctively.



**001 | Highlights**  
With a small brush, paint intense highlights on the places where the light of the bright clouds should be reflected

**002 | Shine**  
Enhance the reflections of the glass parts of the cockpit. A broad brush will increase the shine effect

**003 | Shadows**  
Make the shadows deeper using a soft black brush. It will give the illustration more depth



### 13 ADD CONTRAST

In order to put the fighter in the foreground, you should hugely enhance its contrast on the nearest details. Create a new Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer clipped to the 3D render. Reduce the Brightness and lift the Contrast up to get a really contrasted plane. Then make a fully black mask for it. Grab the Brush tool and paint contrast areas using a soft white brush on the mask.

“Colour reflections are one of the most important things that will help to settle a stock image into a scene”

## BRING IT TO LIFE!

MIX PHOTOS WITH THE 3D RENDER TO ADD REALISM



**14 | TEXTURE** The fighter is still too clean, so let's add dirt! Go to [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com), search and download 'ConcreteLeaking0118' or another dirty texture, then place it into the scene. Convert it to a Smart Object and set the layer mode to Overlay. Unhide the Guides group and hit Cmd/Ctrl+T to activate the Transform tool on the texture. Rotate and move the points using Cmd/Ctrl to lay the texture onto the plane. Reduce the opacity twice. Duplicate the layer and cover all of the fighter.



**17 | PILOT** Go to a photo stock site and collect as many pilots, thumbs-up hands and seats as you can. Place previews into the scene. Choose ones that you like (or just download '35116366', '33404702', '35321320' and '32214514' from iStock). Use adjustment layers to settle the parts into the environment as you did with the plane. Feel free to reuse parts of the body making the pose. The original helmet of the pilot looks a bit strange so you can replace it with the other one. Paint shadows using a soft black brush.

### QUICK TIP

Aerial perspective is a truly powerful tool for achieving realism. It isn't so noticeable in real life but it can greatly improve your work. It isn't obligatory to have a ZDepth pass. You can make a similar mask yourself using black and white brushes.



**15 | COCKPIT** The cockpit is located in the centre of the illustration, and truth be told it's deadly dull and clumsy. The best solution is to make it again from scratch. Create a new group and name it 'Cockpit'. Choose the Pen tool and outline the glass with a path (by the way – the top separator of the cockpit shouldn't be there, so it's a chance to remove it). Create a vector mask for the group using the path. Place the supplied file named 'cockpit-base.png' and align it with the fighter.



**18 | GLASS** Paint the needless cockpit parts behind the pilot with a dark grey brush. Get images 'render-Reflection.png' and 'render-Specular.png' and align them with the fighter, then set their modes to Screen. The first one is a pass that only shows reflections. Enhance its contrast to get a nice result. The second one is a pass that shows highlights. Use a Levels layer to add more white (set the right slider at 170). Create a new layer and mask it to show only the top glass. Add some highlights using a white brush.



**16 | GAUGE PANEL** Don't concentrate on minute details – only the most noticeable ones. The next task is to re-create the screen on the gauge panel. Create a new group for it. Grab the Pen tool and outline the frame of the screen. Fill it with a grey colour picked from a nearby area. Add a new clipped layer and paint highlights with a white brush, then draw a shape for the glass of the screen. Fill it with a blue colour and add some reflections with white strokes.



### USE PHOTO PATCHES

Often 3D models aren't perfect and some parts of them look awful in high resolution, especially if you use a low-poly model. In other cases, far too much time has been spent making them, so they are unnatural-looking. For both problems there is a good solution — photo patches. Photos are the best way to amend clumsy parts of a 3D render and bring a touch of realism into it. These can be textures, screens and gauges or even whole parts of an object like headlights. When you place a photo into a 3D render, use it as a guide for lighting and contrast correction.



**19 | FOG** The fighter is flying through the mist, so let's add some fog on the wings to demonstrate this. Create a group above the fighter and drag in the same 'Smoke0403' image that you used for the landscape. You even can use the same adjustment layers. Hit Cmd/Ctrl+T and place the fog on the right wing. Duplicate it and place the copy on the other wing. Then create a new layer and draw some small pieces of fog on the shoulders of the plane using any rough white brush.



**20 | FIGHTER TRAIL** Let's add a motion effect on the illustration. Unhide the guides and create a group beneath the fighter. Name it 'Fighter trail'. Create a new layer in Normal mode and just draw trails using a soft black brush. Check the direction against the guides! Then create another layer and draw some trails using a white brush. Change the mode of the group to Overlay. It's too intense, so set the Opacity of the group at 30%. Create a mask and hide some parts of the trail using a black brush.



**21 | MISSILE TRAIL** The missile also needs a trail. In this case you need a photo. Go to a stock website and find some photos of launching rockets, shuttles and so on. Choose one or just get image '18769121' from iStock. Create a new group for it and place the file into the scene. Rotate and transform the image, checking it against the guides. Then remove the sky from the photo using a mask and the Quick Selection tool. Apply some adjustment layers to reconcile the image with the scene.



**22 | LIGHT EFFECTS** Let's start with missile trail reflections. You can use the same image but it's quite pale, so go to CGTextures and find image 'Flames0002\_M'. Lay it on the top-right side of the cockpit scene in Screen mode. Do the same for the helmet of the pilot. Also add some yellow tones on the nose of the fighter. Now let's add a bright flare on the missile. Get the supplied file 'light-effect.png' and place it into the scene in Screen mode. Feel free to experiment with it using adjustment layers.



**23 | PARTICLES** In order to make the illustration more dramatic, add some particles flying into the camera. Go to CGTextures and download the first image from 'Fireworks0008'. Open it and remove the background using the Magic Wand tool. Place it into the scene. Rotate and move it to the left-bottom corner using the Transform tool. Create a Brightness/Contrast layer and greatly reduce both the sliders with Use Legacy checked. Use a Hue/Saturation layer to desaturate them twice and change the colour.



**24 | FINAL TOUCHES** Congratulations! Your action scene is now complete. But there is one thing that you can improve. The fighter is currently slightly too merged with the landscape, but you can pull it out using lighting. Create a new layer in Overlay mode beneath the fighter and brighten the space in front of the plane with a large soft white brush. Then darken the space behind it with a black brush. At the end, darken the corners of the scene with broad strokes. Now it's finished!

#### ■ QUICK TIP

For special effects like fire, smoke or splashes, using a stock photo is the fastest way to achieve a great result. Don't hesitate to experiment and try various photos and blending modes. At least you don't need to wait for a lengthy 3D rendering to be performed.

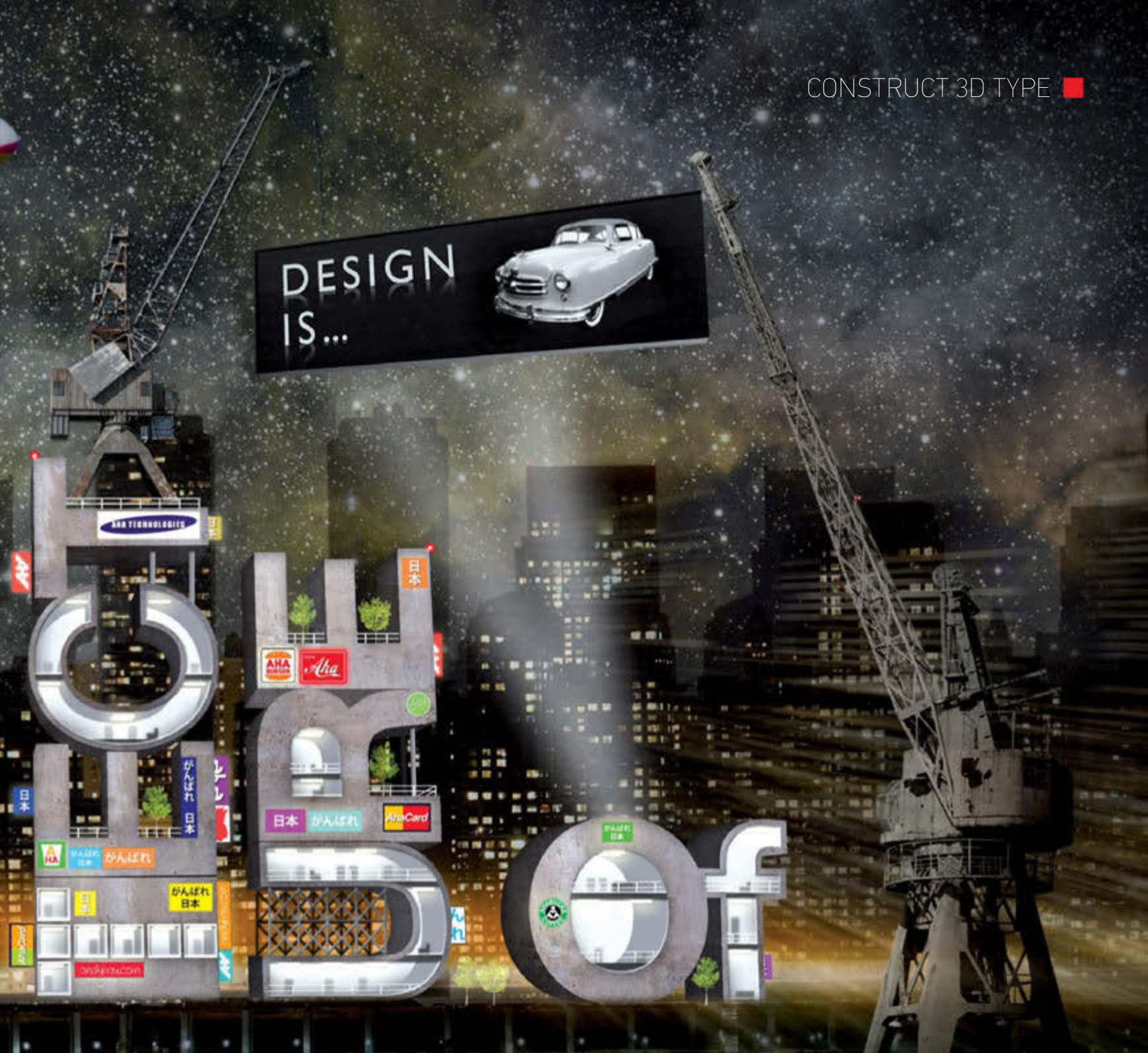


OUR EXPERT

ANDY HAU  
[www.andyhau.com](http://www.andyhau.com)

I am an architect exploring the unexpected results created from the interface between architecture and graphic design. My work is often extravagant but never insincere. The tangibility of the work I do in architecture serves to fuel my appetite for unadulterated escapism in my graphic design work.





# CONSTRUCT 3D TYPE

LEARN HOW TO MERGE URBANISM AND TYPOGRAPHY TO CAPTURE THE EUPHORIA OF BEING IN A CITY

If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck – the chances are it's probably a duck. But one of the many things you learn in architecture is to avoid designing duck buildings, or buildings that look like the object they relate to. For example, if your client were a drinks manufacturer, a giant bottle-shaped building would be pretty lame. My research explores the synergy between architecture and graphic design and the points where they blur, for example in electrographic architecture where built surfaces become subservient to the advertising billboards they display. If buildings can become billboards for

words, couldn't words become pieces of architecture? And an even more interesting path of enquiry would be to consider whether these building blocks of graphic design could be manipulated again to form electrographic architecture.

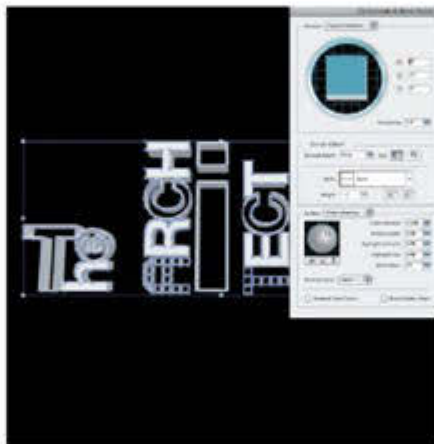
With cyberspace fast becoming the new reality and e-commerce the new architecture, could we reach a point where marketing is so critical that even the words themselves are used for advertising space? This is the inspiration for my image and the context for its abstract motifs. Using photo textures, I aimed to dynamically illustrate how such a future cityscape might look.



## 01 LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Begin by finding a font in Illustrator with qualities that will lend themselves to becoming the physical form of a building. I tend to use sans serif fonts such as Helvetica, useful because of its bulk and clean lines. For the letters formed from windows, use a font such as BDBrick or draw squares to form the shape of the letter. Kern the letters tightly to form the illusion of a dense and bustling city.

“Night-time scenes are more forgiving, providing a veil of darkness for edges to fade into the background”



## 02 ARCHITECTURAL ANATOMY

Fill some of the letters with a solid colour. These will become your expanses of solid façade for advertisement. Keep the other letters as outlines, which will form areas of active frontage for a bit of variety. Now highlight all the letters and group them together (Object>Group). Using the Extrude & Bevel tool in Illustrator (Effect>3D>Extrude & Bevel) set the parameters for the shading and extrude depth. Set the perspective angle according to your design.

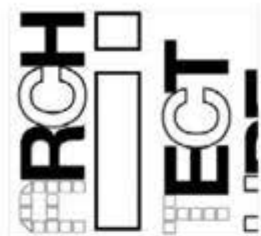


## 03 FAÇADES

Open a new file in Photoshop and drag the 3D lettering into it. Using their outlines as a template, overlay photo textures of real architectural materials such as concrete and metal, and cut out the shapes using the Pen tool. Using the 3D lettering as an indicator, highlight areas of the photo texture using the Polygonal Lasso tool and turn down the Brightness levels (Image>Adjustment>Brightness/Contrast) to create a sense of three-dimensionality.

### WORK IN PROGRESS

HARNESS VISUAL POWER



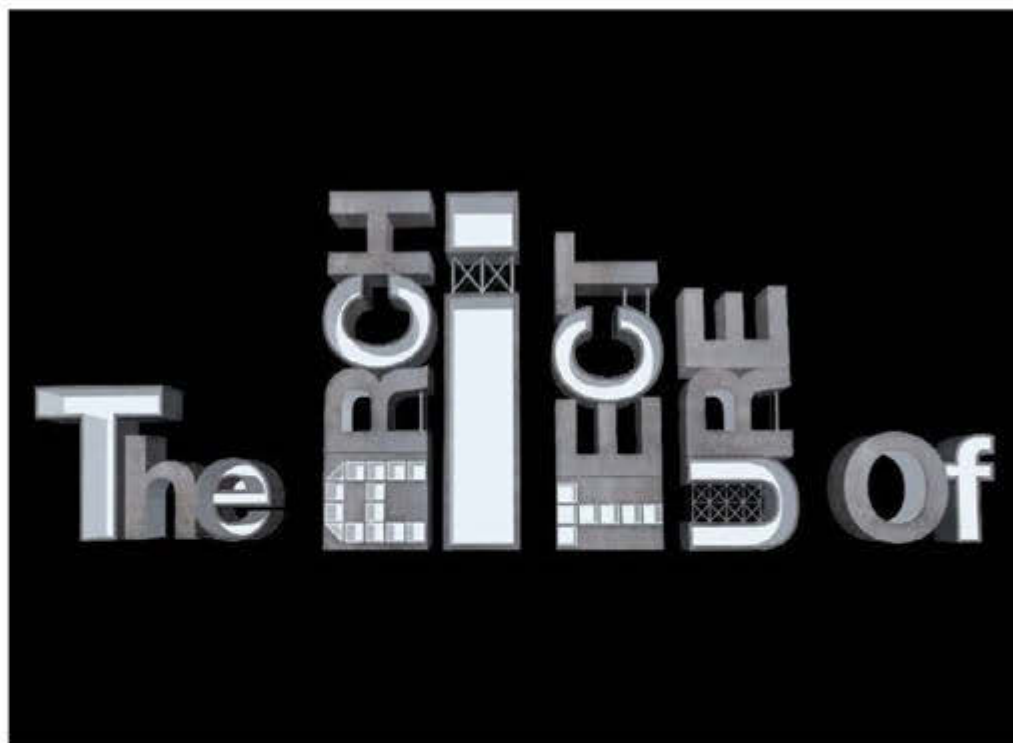
Progress 1: Layout



Progress 2: Advertising



Progress 3: Completion

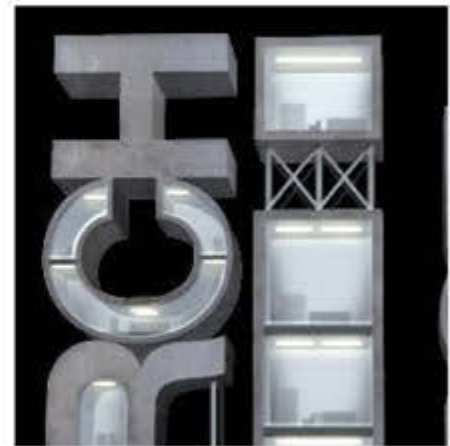
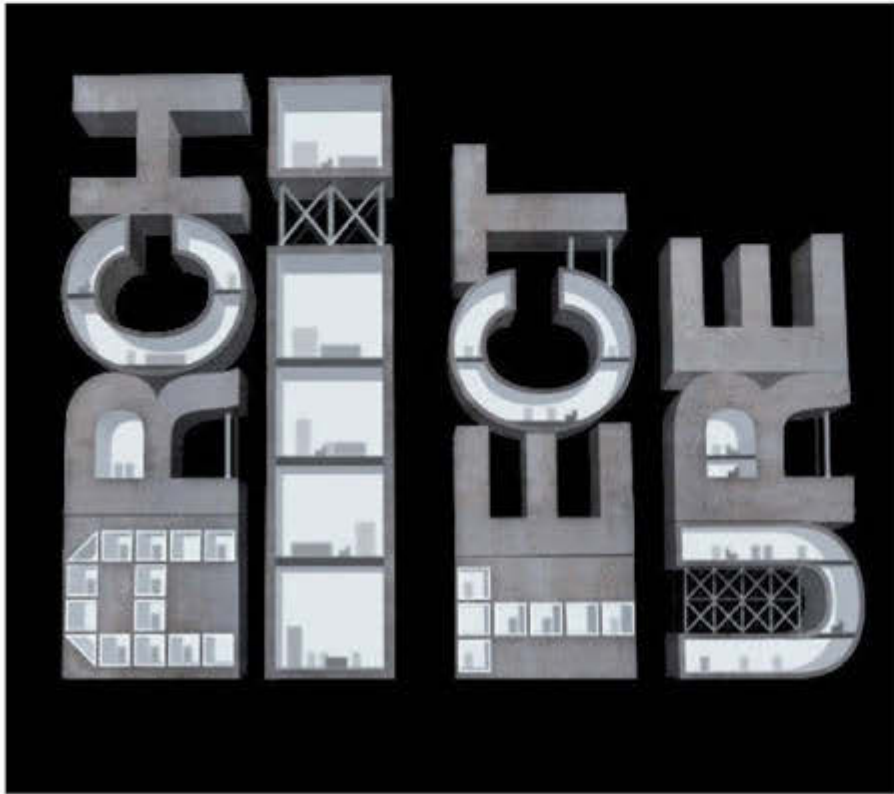


## 04 STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING

Although the image is abstract, there need to be tokens of realism that people will associate with buildings to make the image convincing. Using the Line tool, create columns where you think the buildings may need support, but be sure not to go overboard. There needs to be an element of joy and wonderment – we are designers after all, not engineers. Heaven forfend.

## 05 | INTERIOR DESIGN

Using the Rectangular Marquee tool, draw rectangles approximately the same thickness as the walls and fill them in with a dark colour to create the floor slabs. Now draw dark, rectangular shapes in varying sizes and shades of grey to denote furniture and doors inside the buildings and apply a Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur) to keep the objects ambiguous. Committing to too much detail will confuse the image, especially when you start adding the advertisements.



## 06 | LUMINARIES

One of the most important aspects of creating a successful cityscape is realistic lighting. Draw long, rectangular, white boxes with the Rectangular Marquee tool and locate the positions for the lighting to be placed. Double-click on the layer you are working on and apply a light yellow Outer Glow layer style.

### ■ QUICK TIP

I know cutting out and manipulating photo textures sounds like a Herculean task, especially when you could bypass the whole ordeal and model it in 3D, but trust me, it really is a lot faster and less infuriating to do it this way. And anyway, there's something incredibly reassuring about mindless repetitive labour.



## 07 | ADVERTISING

In Illustrator, create a swarm of neon signs in every garish colour you can think of. You can base them on real logos or come up with your own. Drag the neon signs that you have created from Illustrator into Photoshop one by one and place them onto the façade of the buildings. Try to retain the legibility of the text as you are layering the neon signs.



## 08 | GLAZING

Glazing is notoriously difficult to emulate in Photoshop. The easiest way to deal with it, especially in a night-time image, is to draw everything behind the window and create a light grey fill over the areas of glazing, use the Bevel and Emboss layer style and set the blending mode to Multiply. Play with the opacity settings to achieve the desired effect.



## 09 | ENVIRONMENT

I've chosen to create a night-time scene for various reasons. First, the darkness will make the neon signs and the lighting shine more brightly and will capture the sense of rapture of being in the city. Second, and more importantly, night-time scenes are more forgiving, providing a veil of darkness for edges to disappear and fade into the background.



## 11 | TOWER CRANE

Place the crane in the water in front of the buildings to create a sense of perspective and depth. Select the crane's layer and make a copy of it. Flip the layer vertically (Edit>Transform>Flip Vertical) and apply a Motion Blur (Filter>Blur>Motion Blur). Do not be tempted to set the distance of the blur too high. Turn down the opacity until the blurred object looks like a reflection of the second tower crane.



## 10 | SITE CONTEXT

Create the cityscape behind your buildings by piecing together elements from various cities. Keep the silhouettes dark and ethereal by turning down the opacity; they are only there for context and should not compete with the buildings in front for the viewer's attention.

### ■ QUICK TIP

One of the reasons that computer-generated images end up looking sterile is that the computer works out perspectives mathematically and the eye just does not view in perfect perspectives. Next time, even if theoretically the perspective is wrong, if it looks right visually then stick with it!



## 12 | BILLBOARD

Draw a rectangle, fill it in using a dark colour and start designing your billboard. Play with the perspective to create depth by using the Transform option (Edit>Transform>Perspective). Even though the words on the billboard will form part of a greater sentence in the composition, try to make them relate to the product that it is promoting.



### 13 AIRSHIP

Place the airship at a height that is above the billboard so that the eye is immediately drawn to the first word in the sentence. Horizontally, the position of the airship should relate to the billboard so that the eye picks up the next words. Using the Warp tool (Edit>Transform>Warp), curve the text to align with the surface of the airship for naturalism.

“ Create the cityscape behind your buildings by piecing together elements from various cities. Keep the silhouettes dark and ethereal by turning down the opacity; they are only there for context ”

### 15 LIGHT POLLUTION

To intensify the atmosphere, exaggerate the light pollution behind the buildings. Draw a long, elliptical shape with the Elliptical Marquee tool and adjust the Feather to a high setting. Fill this shape in white and apply an orange Outer Glow layer style. Separate the layer style (Layer>Layer Styles>Create Layer) and delete the bottom half of the glow.



### 14 ADD THE BOATS

Locate the boats in a darker area of water. This will help with the illusion that they are sitting in the water. Delete the bottom section of the boats with the Rectangular Marquee tool, having adjusted the Feather to a low setting. Choose a font that looks like it has been handmade with a paintbrush or something similar, and flip the text vertically. Make a copy of the boats and the text and flip them vertically. Apply a Motion Blur onto the boat layer and give the text layer a small Gaussian Blur. Lower the opacity on both.



### 16 PRACTICAL COMPLETION

Finish the artwork by adding a few more images of trees to the background and adjust the lighting and shading so that the whole image looks balanced as a composition. Zoom out, sit back and enjoy the view.

# EXCEL IN EXPERT BLENDING

TRANSFORM A FLAT 3D RENDER INTO A REALISTIC ILLUSTRATION USING PRO TECHNIQUES

**D**iscover how to turn a flat and dull 3D render into a dynamic photorealistic illustration with impact in this tutorial. You will learn how to use the power of render passes to transform a dull render and then create a unique and seamless background from a combination of photos. Finally, you will use non-destructive adjustment layers as well as layers of colour to complete a dramatic transformation and produce a beautifully finished illustration.

The inspiration for this image comes from the long tradition of aviation art, with the objective being to

pay homage to the genre. This image depicts a high-altitude pursuit between a Eurofighter and an MiG-29, and you want to convey a sense of heightened realism with rich colour and a slightly illustrative feel.

While plane renders are generated in 3D software, Photoshop lets us break free of the limitations of the render and quickly build up a final illustration that integrates 3D elements, photo backgrounds and effects as well as develop a unique colour look. The speed of this process is what makes Photoshop an indispensable part of the 3D rendering workflow.



**OUR EXPERT**

**BRENDAN MCCAFFREY**  
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McCaffrey is a digital illustrator based in Spain who produces promotional artwork for videogames, toys, products and vehicles.



**SOURCE FILES**

You can find a PSD containing the two planes and the original rendered layer passes from 3D Studio Max/V-Ray. Visit <http://bit.ly/1FtEQx>.

## WORK IN PROGRESS FROM ELEMENTS TO FULL INTEGRATION



**Progress 1:**  
Improving the 3D renders



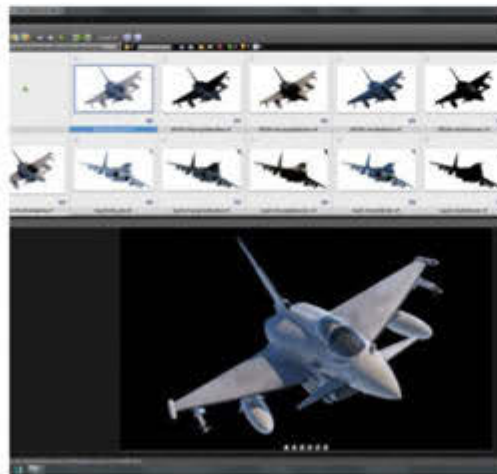
**Progress 2:**  
Building the environment



**Progress 3:**  
Final integrated image

## PREPARING THE BASE IMPORT THE RENDER PASSES AND CUT OUT THE PLANES

**01 RENDER IN PASSES**  
In order to have maximum control of the render, it's important to have the render in passes. This means having at least the beauty pass and the reflection pass. Diffuse and specular passes are also useful. Here we have provided passes for the sunlight and bounce light from clouds.



**02 IMPORT PASSES INTO PHOTOSHOP**  
Go to File>Scripts>Load files into stack. Select the passes for the first plane, EF2000. This will load the passes into the same PSD document along with the alpha channel. Group these layers and do the same for the MiG-29. Ctrl/right-click on the group and Duplicate Group into the EF2000 PSD. Duplicate the alpha channel for the MiG-29 as well.



**03 CUT OUT THE PLANES**  
In the Channels tab, select the alpha channel for the first plane. Use Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I to invert the selection and delete the black space from each layer to isolate the render. On the main beauty layer, use Layer>Matting>Remove Black Matte to quickly remove the black edge from the render. Repeat this step for the second plane.





## 04 SET UP THE WORKSPACE

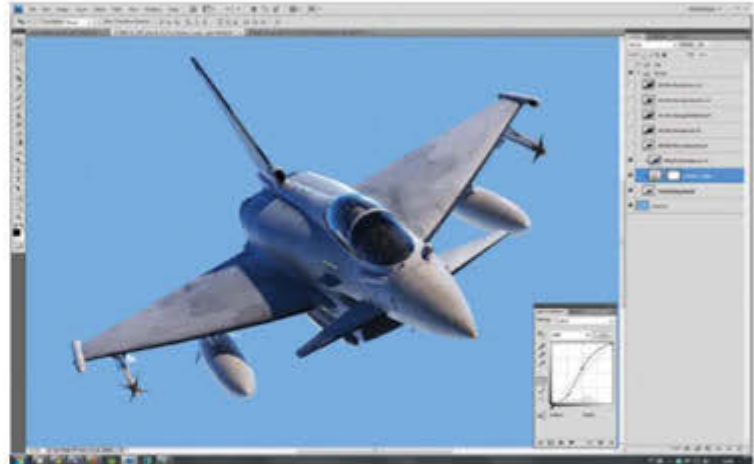
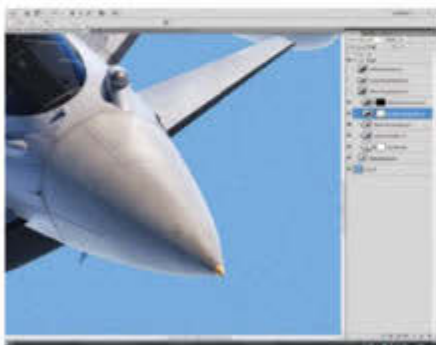
In both the plane groups, make sure the beauty pass is on the bottom of each group and the passes are turned off. You want to start with just the base render here. To give a bit more bleed to the image, go to Image>Canvas Size and set the size at 5500 x 4000 pixels. Create a new layer at the bottom of the stack and fill it with a sky blue. You can use this to start working with the renders before developing the backplate.

## 06 MORE DIFFUSE AND SPECULAR

The pass called Total Lighting is all the diffuse lighting without any reflections or specular, and can be used in Screen mode to add overall light back into the image. Set at 25%, it brightens up the render. You can also use the specular pass here to increase the intensity of the highlights. Set it to Linear Dodge at 40%. Create a mask and use a brush with a splatter pattern to break up the over-bright highlights for a grungier look.

## 07 NOSE CONE HIGHLIGHT

Having render passes allows a lot of flexibility in controlling the image after the time-consuming render process. Here you can add in a highlight on the nose cone to help communicate the form better. Right now it's quite flat, so you can use the specular layer to create a strong highlight. Duplicate the specular layer, set it to Screen mode at 100%, and add a Levels adjustment (0,1.0,100). This will make the specular brighter without having to add extra layers. Mask off the highlight to just the cone using a splatter brush.



## 05 WORK WITH THE RENDER PASSES

The base render is very flat, so using the layers you're going to try to make it more dynamic. The first obvious step is to increase the contrast. To do this, add a Curves adjustment layer. Opt/Alt-click between the layers to create a clipping mask so it only affects the render. Set the Opacity of the Curves to 40%. You can also use the reflection layer in Overlay mode set to 40% Opacity. This will give you a stronger blue colour in the reflections.



## 08 ADD THE REFLECTION PASS

The reflection pass is a very powerful tool for post-production and can have dramatic effects. It's best to have the reflections in the render slightly lower than desired so you can have more control in Photoshop. Set the layer mode to Screen at 60%. At high altitudes, the light is very intense, so the reflections would be very bright and blue. To increase the reflection on the glass canopy, duplicate the layer and set Opacity to 40%. Mask the layer to the glass.

### ■ QUICK TIP

Mask specular and reflection layer passes with grunge brushes to banish those obvious CG highlights and create more natural and weathered-looking surfaces.



## BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THE RENDER

USE THE RENDER BEAUTY PASS AS A START POINT TO INJECT YOUR OWN CREATIVITY INTO THE WORK

### 09 CONTROLLING LIGHTS

Most renderers allow output of passes for lighting. V-Ray can output a pass for each light, which can be very useful for quickly adding in extra light from other sources. They can also be used to change the colour of the light with a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. You can use this to increase the warm/cool balance in the image.

#### 001 Sunlight

Set the sunlight pass to Screen mode at 70% and mask off areas where it is not needed

#### 002 Warming up

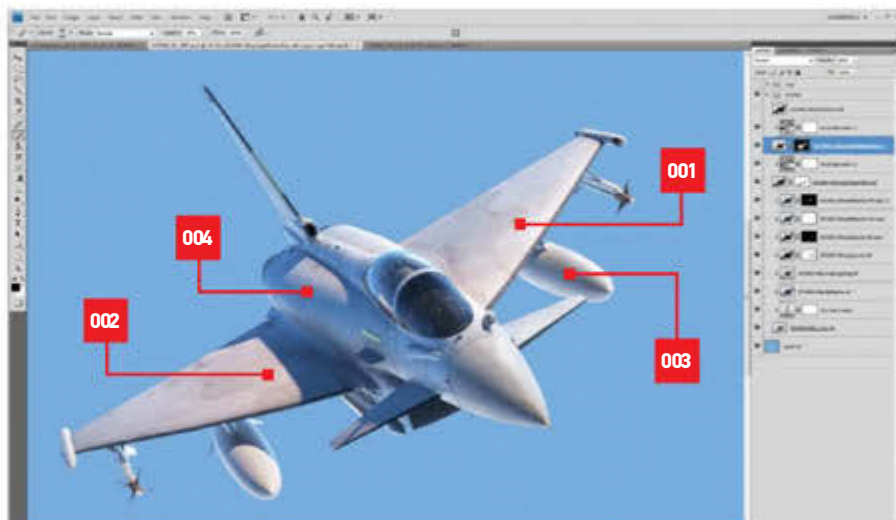
Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer set to Colorize and make the layer a saturated orange to warm up the sunlight

#### 003 Cloud light

Set the cloud light layer to Screen mode at 50% and mask off areas where it is overexposed

#### 004 Boost the saturation

Increase the Saturation by 50% using a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, with clipping mask activated, to intensify the blue ambient light



### 10 SHARPENING

As often happens with 3D renders, the image is a little soft, so you can apply a non-destructive sharpening layer. Cmd/Ctrl-click on one of the plane layers, selecting the layer transparency, then Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+C to copy the merged layers and paste to a new layer. Select Filter>High Pass and set Radius to 3.0 and the layer blending mode to Overlay at about 50%. This will sharpen the plane and the level of sharpening can be controlled with the Opacity of this layer.



“The reflection pass is a very powerful tool for post-production and can have dramatic effects”

### 11 COMP THE CHASING PLANE

You can build up the comp layers for the chasing plane in much the same way as the hero plane. In this case, you could add more diffuse blue light and more reflection to give the impression of distance. Also add a new layer, select the MiG-29 layer opacity and fill with sky blue. Set Mode to Normal and reduce Opacity to 10%. This will control the distant fog. Here you can see a before and after of the plane with the additional layers.



### 13 CUT AWAY THE CHAFF

With the elements in place, you can remove all the unwanted parts of the photos. You need mostly clouds, so remove the skies. This can be done initially with the Magic Wand with Tolerance at 30, or the Eraser tool, and can be very rough to start as you will use masking to blend the cloud edges later. Right now is the time to experiment with the layout and with different photos to see what works on a compositional level before doing a lot of time-consuming blending.

### 12 CREATE THE BACKGROUND

To create the background, you're going to need a combination of a few different photos. All the images here are from [cgtextures.com](http://cgtextures.com). You want a clear blue sky in the background, fluffy clouds around the planes and a view of the ground underneath. Start by bringing in all the elements needed and loosely arrange them. It can be a total mess at this stage as you play with different elements and compositions. Once you have a comp that works, you can start blending the photos together.

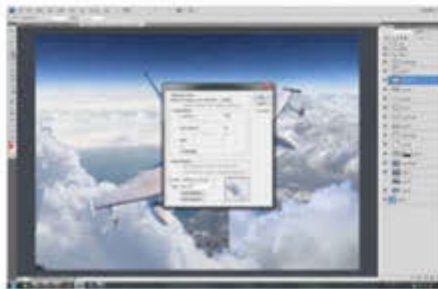


## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

FINISH THE BACKGROUND AND ADD THE FINAL COLOUR ADJUSTMENT TO POLISH YOUR ILLUSTRATION OFF

### 14 COLOUR AND BLENDS

Before blending everything together, all the photos need to be brought into the same general colour space. This can be done with a combination of the Match Color tool for the cloud layers and the Hue/Saturation tool for the ground layers. You will be doing overall colour adjustments at the end, so it's only important to get it mostly correct at this stage. We can also begin blending the layers in the distance using the Eraser tool with a simple soft round brush.



### 15 FOREGROUND CLOUDS

To correct the edges of the foreground clouds, you can combine two techniques. First, lock the layer transparency in the Layers panel, then use the Clone brush to fill out the white cloud to the edge so there is no dark edge. Unlock the layer transparency and then use the Eraser tool with a cloud pattern brush to erase back the edge slightly so it looks soft and fluffy. Increase spacing in the Brush panel and turn on Angle and Size Jitter for a more random edge.



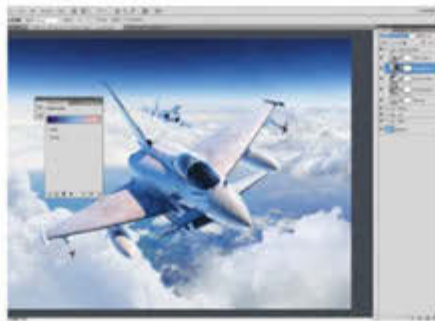
### 16 FLARES AND EFFECTS

Adding in some effects like light flares, sparingly, will add a nice touch. You can also add in some simple exhaust jets with the Lasso and Gradient tools. Add Filter>Distort>Glass to the background for some heat effects. Vapour trails can also be added to the wing tips with a small brush. Finish by adding in photographed flares from real surfaces over the specular highlights. This adds nice micro detail around the highlights, especially on the glass, which will make it look less CG.



### 17 FIRST ROUND COLOUR CORRECTION

To achieve the look of high altitude, you can start to experiment with colour adjustment layers. Push the contrast with a Curves layer. Increase the saturation slightly with a Hue/Saturation layer. A Black & White layer set to the Blue filter and Soft Light at 50% brings out more blue. A Gradient Map set to Overlay, 11%, shifts the colours towards a defined palette that goes from cool shadows to warm highlights. Experiment with a combination of these layers to develop the desired look.



### 18 FINAL COLOURING

To complete the final look, you are going to add colour gradient layers to tint the image. This will help with the illustrative look. Set the layer mode to Overlay and start to fill in gradients. Again, experiment here with Opacity and Mode. Pick colours from the overall palette of blue and orange/red and it will help tie everything together. Finally, you can add a vignette to bring focus to the centre of the image and a Hue/Saturation layer and Black & White layer for the finishing touches.



#### TIE COLOURS TOGETHER

A great way to bring colours together from different image sources is to use the Gradient Map and Black & White adjustment layers. Sometimes the colours only need a nudge at the end and these adjustment layers are perfect for that, especially when used at low opacity. Using them in Overlay or Soft Light mode can produce nice effects as well as adding contrast. Don't be afraid to add lots of adjustment layers to the image and experiment with different blend modes and combinations to develop a unique look.



#### QUICK TIP

Use non-destructive adjustments wherever possible so changes can be made easily and updated renders can be integrated into the PSD file without having to rebuild the entire comp.



# CREATE PRO KEY ART

LEARN HOW TO CREATE AN EPIC VIDEOGAME KEY ART TO CAPTURE YOUR AUDIENCE

**T**he entertainment industry relies on the use of powerful imagery that can touch an audience emotionally, and create memorable campaigns for film or videogame launches. Whether iconic, cryptic or a mixture of both, key art pieces and posters have the sole purpose of making a bold statement to immediately connect with fans across the globe.

Therefore, a good key art is fundamental for a successful campaign, and in some cases, it can determine how well or poorly a franchise will perform. Massive, slick, iconic, epic – these are all words that should be kept in mind when creating key

art, artwork that has the universal ability of telling a story in an instant and grabbing the viewer's attention with a single glance.

Over the next few pages you will get an exclusive behind the scenes look at how we created the *Goleador League* key art. This piece is a fantasy soccer-themed mobile game that our studio recently launched for Italian confectionery manufacturer, Perfetti Van Melle.

From the integration of 3D elements with 2D layer compositing, to creating a digital matte painting backdrop, this tutorial will guide you through the steps needed to create a real world videogame key art.



## OUR EXPERTS

**DAVIDE BIANCA,**  
**ANDREA MANCUSO**  
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[@saizenmedia](https://twitter.com/saizenmedia)

Davide Bianca is the founder & Executive Creative Director of Saizen Media, based in both Los Angeles and Milan.

Andrea Mancuso is the lead CG artist at Saizen Media. He has experience in CG film, videogame projects, key art and illustration.

## WORK IN PROGRESS BUILDING A CHARACTER



Progress 1: Initial layering and compositing



Progress 2: Setting up the main composition



Progress 3: Adding details to the character

## CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT CINEMATIC COMPOSITION

**01** **CINEMATIC COMPOSITION**  
Set-up your work area according to the specifications. Add extra padding space around main elements to allow for cropping. It's useful to set up your layers in groups, keeping characters, environmental elements, adjustment layers and the backdrop separated, to easily readjust if needed. For this tutorial, we will be using a cinematic widescreen, double fold-out format at 300 dpi – a size big enough for posters and magazine inserts.



**02** **MANAGING CG LAYERS**  
Import all character CG layers into your composition, stacking the layers in the necessary order. Start with the colour pass and proceed with two copies of occlusion, one normal layer, and a reflections layer. Double click on the first occlusion layer and set its blend mode to Multiply. Repeat the same step for the second copy and set the blend mode to Overlay. Finally, set the reflections layers blend mode to Screen. Adjust the opacity of each layer to achieve the desired look.

“The world a character lives in is what makes the scene believable, as it provides a sense of context.”



**03** **BLOCKING SHAPES IN**  
Create basic outlines for the backdrop. Keep in mind that the main focus is on the character. However, the world a character lives in is what makes the scene believable, as it provides a sense context and location for the events being depicted. Loosely block in basic shapes and colours for the snowy mountains, skyline and foreground. Keep the colours and shapes interesting, forcing the eye into the distance and conveying a sense of grand scale. You will use these shapes as guides for detailing and texturing by integrating photographic assets.



**04** **ADDING RIM LIGHTS**  
Use the normal CG layer as an illumination layer. Desaturate it by selecting Hue/Saturation from the adjustment menu. Next, with the layer still selected, press Cmd/Ctrl+I to invert it. Select Gamma Curves (Cmd/Ctrl+M), and adjust the curve until you get a black image with a glow around the border. Go to Color Balance (Cmd/Ctrl+B) and tint the layer with Cyan and Blue. Then double click on the layer and set the blend mode to Screen. This will create a blue rim around your character to simulate the moonlight. Use the Eraser tool to eliminate areas that aren't lit.



## 05 | CREATING BELIEVABLE SKIN

Rendering believable skin is tedious, but it makes a huge difference. Custom texture maps are generally created for the 3D model, however, you will want to add more detail to the renders by including elements like bruises, scars and imperfections to make the character realistic. Place battle scars or wounds on the character in areas not protected by the armour, this will help create a visual narrative. Paint in extra pores and veins in certain areas, and don't be afraid to experiment with bouncing lights and translucency to simulate sub-surface scattering or wet surfaces.



## 06 | TELL THE STORY WITH CLOTHING

The same principles used for believable skin rendering also apply to clothes – remember that we are telling a story through a single image, so we want to convey as much narrative detail as possible. A Viking warrior wears hand-made animal leather clothes – a compromise between warmth and tactical practicality during battle. Add details of blood stains, dirt and wear and tear, to enhance the look of the fabric. Small rips and holes in the cape or trousers will serve as a reminder of past battles.



## 07 | BUILD HEAVY METAL

A Viking helm is one of the most iconic battle props. Its unique shape and curled horns are immediately recognisable, and convey a sense of strength. The eye will naturally be drawn to the helm, so make this the main focal point of your piece. Work with the Dodge and Burn tools to create the roughness of a hammered metal sheet. Apply heavy scratches by combining brush strokes with photographic assets. Follow the shape of the helm, keeping in mind your light sources and how light bounces off curved surfaces.

### ■ QUICK TIP

When working with complex lighting, constant fine-tuning is necessary. Always use editable adjustment layers instead of non-reversible actions. You can apply adjustment layers to a single layer, or to a group of layers, by placing them directly above the target layer or group, and using the Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+G command.



## 08 | CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT

At this stage, break away from your character and focus on the environment that he lives in. Start by choosing a colour palette that makes sense, with the tone and mood setting the scene that you are depicting. Fill in the areas that you outlined previously with more defined brush strokes to simulate the moonlight bouncing off the snow and casting shadows. Use photographic assets both as a reference and as textures to obtain a proper realistic finish. Use the Dodge and Burn tools to darken poorly lit areas or to reflect more light.



## 09 | ADD ATMOSPHERIC ELEMENTS

Everything looks more epic with fog and mist. There are plenty of ways to create great particle effects. For this key art, our team used the particle engine in Arnold to create thin layers of dynamic rolling smoke, combined with hand painted thicker layers in the foreground. Place the smoke layers at the top of your layer stack and set their blend modes to Screen. You will want to keep the opacity quite low. With a large soft brush erase the areas further away from light sources.

### 10 ALTER THE DEPTH OF FIELD

Our brain processes imagery based on colour, shapes and depth. So push the depth of your image as far as possible in order to make it pop. Duplicate your character group and merge its content – keep the original group disabled as a backup. Using the Blur tool, begin softening the contours. Use a small brush with low strength. Next increase the strength and blur the areas further away, while keeping the rest sharp. This will direct the viewer's eye to the focal points, simulating the cinematic depth of field of a 50mm lens.



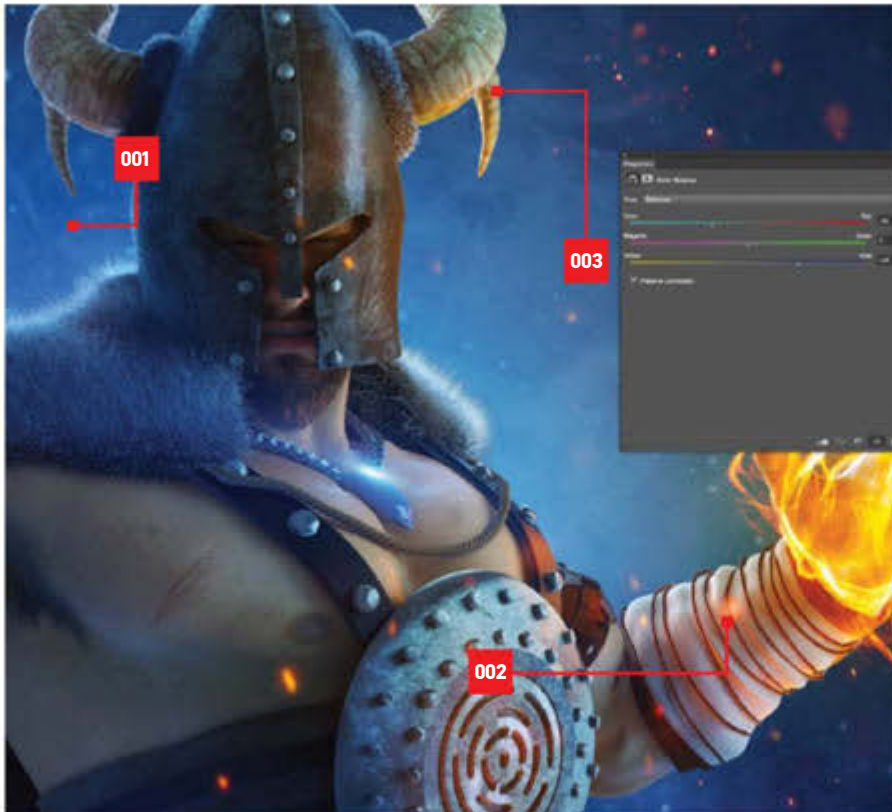
### 11 MAGIC PARTICLES

This is a fantasy game, so your character will, of course, have supernatural abilities. Use a particle system as secondary focal point to counter-balance elements and guide the viewer's eye across the piece. Use warm colours to contrast the cool tints of the environment. Start with an orange tint and begin outlining your magical flares. Switch to lighter tints in correspondence with heat sources. Keep shapes dynamic and interesting. Integrate a soft layer of smoke and an Overlay orange glow layer to add realism and make the colours really pop.



### 12 BALANCING

Create a new group containing adjustment layers for Gamma Curves, Brightness/Contrast, and Colour Balance, and place them at the top of your composite. These will serve as master colour correction settings. Adjust the Gamma Curves until the image looks properly lit. Gamma Curves are also helpful to remove possible artifacts resulting from Screen layers and compositing. Use Brightness/Contrast to bring out highlights, and use the Colour Balance settings to increase Cyan and Blue on both highlights and mid tones, as this will help blend elements seamlessly and unify tints.



**001 | COLOUR BANDING**  
Dark areas can show artefacts. To eliminate noticeable colour-banding, apply a 0.8 Uniform Noise to the Screen layer

**002 | BOUNCING LIGHTS**  
Pay attention to rolling surfaces or sharp edges, and add extra highlights or rim lights to increase realism

**003 | TEXTURING THE HORNS**  
Layer extra textures on the horns to convey a sense of an ancient and mythological animal

### 13 PUSHING IT FURTHER

Use three separate planes of interest to further increase the depth of the environment. Keep the foreground elements sharp and bright, the midground elements softly blurred and mildly lit, and elements in the far distance heavily blurred and dark. The reduced readability of far away elements, such as the faraway mountain tops or rock formations, will serve as hinted reading values – the viewer's brain will complete the missing portions by filling in the blanks. This allows us to get away with minimal colour variation while obtaining a very rich and full effect.



### 14 ADD DRAMA (SKY AND CLOUDS)

A dark sky will set the mood and drive the eye into the distance. You will want to create clouds that form interesting shapes, low enough on the horizon to create enough contrast to allow for easily readable mountain tops. Use a large soft brush to paint black on top of areas to simulate rarefaction of the atmosphere and the light bouncing off. Ensure the clouds and foreground fog don't clash.



## 15 | ALTERNATING SHADERS

Just like colours and tints, materials and shaders work best together when they create visual rhythm. Pay special attention to creating interesting, alternating patterns of smooth and rough textures. For example, a glossy metal bolt will look more interesting if placed over a rough leather patch. Next add rust and scratches to the chest metal plate. Then using a 1pt brush, paint fuzzy areas around the edges of the abdominal band fabric, sampling the proper shades. This will create a more realistic material and convey a sense of wear and tear.

## 18 | USING SOFT GRADIENTS

Create a new layer and place it at the top of your background group. Using a large soft circular brush, start painting black over the far bottom edges of the environment. Try following the curves of the rock formations to naturally cast shadows. Using soft gradients will add an extra level of dimensionality to your backdrop, simulating natural light and shadow casting. Set the layer to Overlay and adjust the Opacity accordingly. Repeat the same process on the lower portion of the character.



## 19 | FIRE EMBERS

Create a layer on top of your composition and using a 2pt brush, paint light orange dots. Double click on the layer to access its properties and select the Outer Glow option. Then choose a red tint and adjust the Radius and Choke. Now using the Smudge tool with a 5pt brush, apply strokes on one side of the ember particle pulling away from it. This will create a trail or path, giving a sense of motion. Repeat this step as needed. You can also blur specific ember layers to simulate distance from the camera.



## 16 | HIGHLIGHTS AND LENS FLARES

Create a new layer at the top of your character group and set its blend mode to Overlay. Using a soft brush, paint white hot spots over the areas that receive specular light – this will help to brighten those areas. Pay special attention to edges and corners directly in the trajectory of light as these areas should reflect more light. For extra realism, consider integrating photographic assets of (anamorphic) lens flares by appropriately sizing them, adjusting their tints, and setting them in Screen mode over the area of interest.



## 17 | SHARPENING DETAILS

Using the Sharpen tool set to 50% strength, start applying firm strokes over the character's beard, eyes and lips. Proceed gently, making sure that the sharpening process does not damage the image or cause any pixelation. The main goal here is to increase immediate readability in emotionally relevant areas. Repeat the same process on portions of the skin or steel plates that you want to guide the viewer to.

### ■ QUICK TIP

When working on high-resolution images for print, you will be constantly zooming in and out of your canvas and will want to watch out for artefacts, pixelation and aliasing. Press Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+0 to toggle back to the images actual pixel size and ensure your artwork is crisp.



## 20 | FINAL TOUCHES

At this point you will make the final tweaks and corrections, fine-tune your Colour Correction settings by accessing the adjustment layers, and export a final raster image. Always make sure your colour profile and document settings match the required output formats. Keep in mind that typically, due to the natural ink absorption process on paper, there is a 10% Luminosity drop from screen to print. So if you are delivering ready-to-print files, make sure to save a print-specific variant with an additional 10% punch in Gamma Curves.

# DIGITAL PAINTING

Compose stunning portraits and lavish fantasy landscapes with just a swipe of your digital brush

## **084** 25 tips for comic artists

The experts reveal their top tips for comic artists, ranging from form and function to find your niche

## **094** Master real paint effects in Photoshop

Create a fantastical digital illustration using traditional painting techniques

## **100** Create game art

Flesh out a fully rendered concept character using custom brushes and adjustment layers

## **106** Create a stained glass effect

Use colouring techniques and blending modes to mimic streaming light

## **112** Low-poly portraits

Create a low-poly illustration by combining Photoshop and Illustrator for pixel-perfect results

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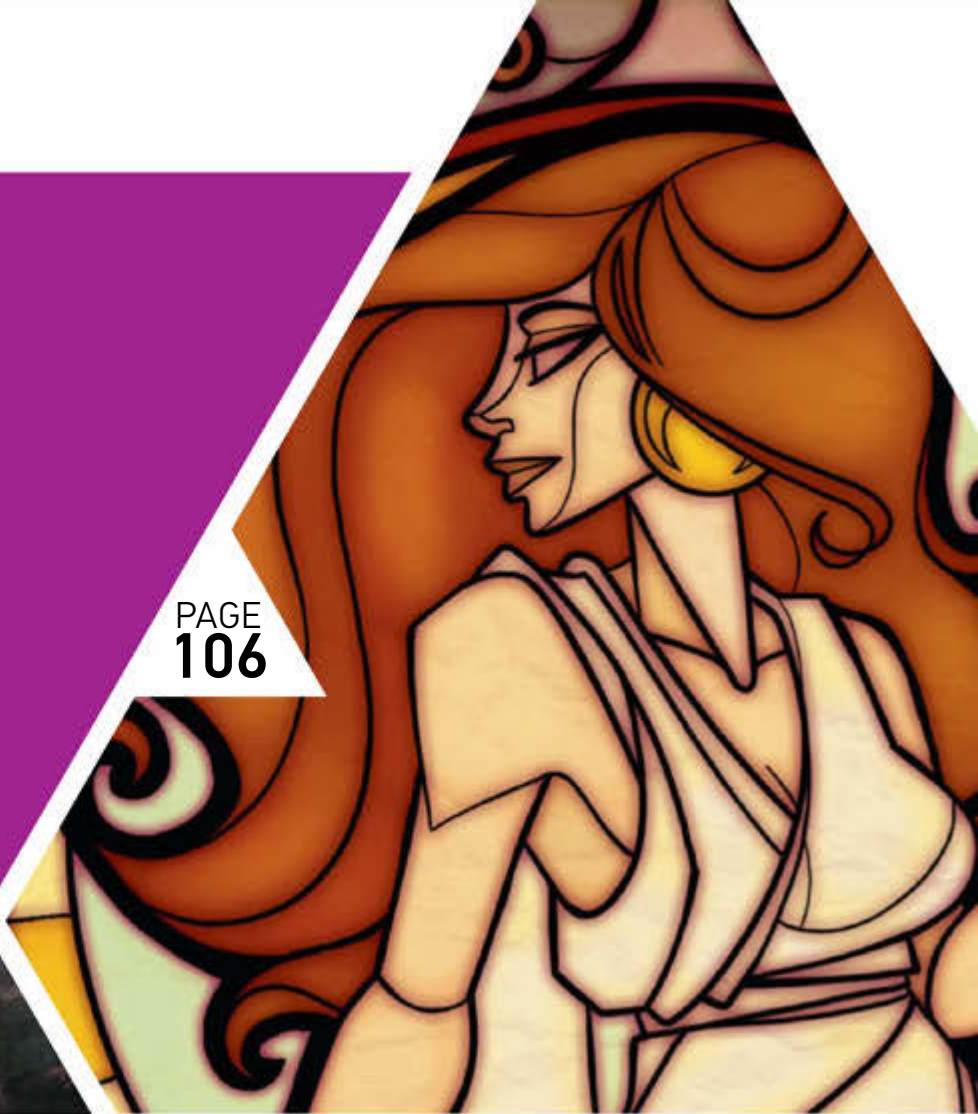


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“Aside from brushes,  
having a library of  
royalty-free  
textures is also  
highly beneficial

# 25 TIPS FOR COMIC ARTISTS

COMIC ART WEAVES TOGETHER WORDS AND PICTURES, IT SPANS GENRES AND TOPICS, AND IT APPEALS TO BOTH SEXES AND ALL AGE RANGES. BUT AS THE EXPERTS REVEAL, ALL IT NEEDS IS A GREAT STORY

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## 01. FORM AND FUNCTION

A PAGE FROM LUKE PEARSON'S ([HTTP://LUKEPEARSON.COM](http://LUKEPEARSON.COM)) *HILDA* AND *THE BLACK HOUND* SHOWS HOW A GOOD COMIC SHOULD FUNCTION



© Luke Pearson/Nobrow Press

**Matters of style:** "For the *Hilda* comics, I think my style is pretty much a mixture of Franco-Belgian comic art, Tove Jansson, and the cartoonier end of Manga (Osamu Tezuka, Akira Toriyama). At least that's what I consciously think about."

**Contrast action and tone:** "Hilda has a big, expressive face and is fun to throw around and do physical stuff with. I like to play that stuff up for certain melodramatic scenes. But I also try to pull back from it and create a quieter mood a lot of the time, which maybe plays against how it looks."

**A question of colour:** "My colour theory consists of spending forever picking out a few colours that complement each other (and that Hilda looks good placed in front of, as she's in nearly every panel) and then only adding new tones and colours into the mix when it looks weird if I don't."

**On the turn:** "Breaking it into pages is one of the most important parts for me, as I like to try and hit certain notes on a page turn, and I'll usually have a good idea where in the story I want certain events to occur."

**Grow into your characters:** "If you draw a character for a sustained amount of time, you slowly iron out all the kinks and your hand eventually learns how to do it on its own accord. But the start always looks a bit ropey in hindsight. If you draw the pages in order though, it's a gradual change and the reader doesn't notice it."

**Face the fear (and do it anyway):** "Pearson says the *Hilda* comics are incredibly challenging. 'Each one ends up being the longest comic I've ever done, takes me longer than I think and usually ends up including a bunch of stuff I'm not confident at drawing that I have to figure out in a short amount of time. I had some kind of brief meltdown during each one.'

## 03. DON'T POLISH, JUST FINISH

For Daniel de Sosa (<http://oi.thecomicseries.com>), starting the first issue of his comic series *Oil Tales Of Bardic Fury*, which he did as his final project for his illustration course at university, is still the most challenging project he's ever worked on. "I had never made a long-form story comic before," he explains, "so there were a lot of things I had no idea how to do. It was really overwhelming to sit down midway through pencilling the first page and realise I had 20 more pages to go. There were also a lot of things in the story that I wasn't sure I'd be able to draw, as I'd never drawn them before. I tackled this problem simply by bombing forward anyway, and focusing

on finishing one page at a time. It was hard work, and took me twice as long to do as it would take me now, simply because I was so clueless as to what I was doing. Overall I hardly slept, made loads of mistakes, but somehow managed to meet the deadline I set for myself. The comic has had a really good response ever since I started putting it online and taking it to comic conventions, so the hard work and sleepless nights definitely paid off. So that's my advice: every time you feel overwhelmed, and unsure of your ability to tackle a project, just bomb forward and do it anyway. You will make loads of mistakes like I did, but it's the only way to get better."



© Daniel de Sosa



© Mako Fufu

## 02. PICTURE THE BIG SCREEN

Manga artist Mako Fufu ([www.makofufu.com](http://www.makofufu.com)) says that "a good comic artist is the one who not only tells the story, but also uses their talent and creativity to make the pages visually interesting yet easy to read. As comics must be thought of in a cinematic fashion, the artist should be able to read the script while their mind is creating and playing a movie version in their head, which they would translate to panels afterwards. In comics you can (and should) play with the panel shapes as well. That would make the page more visually attractive, and at the same time it's a resource to accentuate certain acts, objects, emotions and such. The artist has to direct and edit, being able to figure out when the page needs a few panels to describe an action, and when it's time for a change of scene or day, moving to the next part by inserting a panel with different scenery (or a sunrise, for a change of day, for example)."

Fufu fully embraces the manga aesthetic, which gives her other visual elements to fill her (cinematic) frame with. She says: "There are many specific characteristics from this style, like the sweat drop for uncomfortable situations, the huge vein for anger, the dynamic positioning and shape of the panel and also different types of screentones, including abstract backgrounds. Many of these have been popularised and may be found in non-manga-style comics, though."

## 04. ALWAYS SERVE THE STORY

### 001 | Pace your panels

Christian Ward ([www.cjwardart.com](http://www.cjwardart.com)) believes the most important thing a comic artist must be is a good storyteller. He says: "There's a fantastic Alan Moore quote; paraphrasing it he said 'it was the artist's job to slow the reader down'. It's true. Each panel is a bubble designed to hold the reader's attention for a certain amount of time. I also think the shape of a panel and how it relates to other panels can also help with storytelling, not just holding the attention but directing it."

### 002 | Play with the page

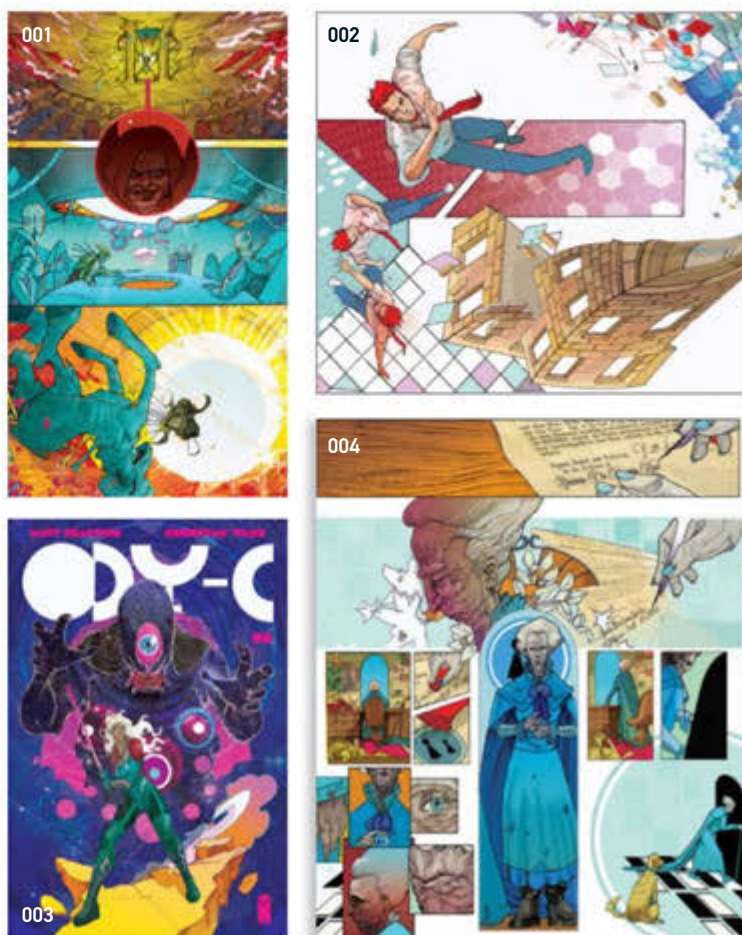
Ward is "interested in using the panel structure to play a part in storytelling. For instance, in my previous book *The Infinite Vacation* (with writer Nick Spencer), I had a sequence of double-page spreads that had you rotating the book in your hand as you read them, mimicking the spiralling universes our hero found himself in."

### 003 | Colour as storyteller

"I colour in an expressionist way," says Ward, "allowing a character's or a scene's mood to influence how they and the page is coloured. 50 per cent of my storytelling comes from colour. In *ODY-C*, for instance, I want the colour to reflect the mythological quality of the story. Give it a hyper-reality. The colour turned up to ten. I looked at a lot of Hindu iconography and the depiction of the gods is so saturated by colour."

### 004 | Start with the script

Ward says: "Once I read through the script a few times and feel I have a good handle on all the beats, I do a very quick layout sketch in Photoshop. Here I'll focus on the page's structure and flow. It's easy to chop and change things and see what works and what doesn't. Everything else is just decoration, and in fact without a good handle of storytelling – being able to convey the story in a fluid, clear and yet atmospheric fashion – you don't have good comics."



All images © Christian Ward

## 05. FIND YOUR NICHE

TOM HUMBERSTONE ([WWW.TOMHUMBERSTONE.COM](http://WWW.TOMHUMBERSTONE.COM)) WRITES A WEEKLY COMIC STRIP FOR THE *NEW STATESMAN*. HE EXPLAINS HOW IT'S DONE...



### 01 | DOUBLE THE DRAW

"I start by drawing my page using non-repro blue pencil on 300 vellum Strathmore Bristol board. I ink it using Windsor & Newton Series 7 brushes and a Hunt 102 dip pen. I alternate between Deleter and W&N inks. The image is drawn about double the size it appears in print. Once the image is scanned, I prep it for colour work by adjusting contrasts, running an Unsharp Mask filter, and converting to bitmap."



### 02 | MAKE PANELS POP

"I add a white background layer and between that and the line-art layer, I start laying in flat colours. Once I have all my flat colours in place, I use the flats to select parts of the image I want to colour in more detail on a separate layer on top. On another layer above that, I do the same for areas I want to add gradients to. Generally I tend to avoid using gradients, but I added a couple for this piece as it seemed to make a couple of panels stronger."



### 03 | COLOUR CORRECTION

"I do the lettering using a font of my handwriting, group all the text layers together and then draw balloons/caption boxes in layers underneath the text group. I add custom textures and grains that I've made through the years using paint or screenprinting. I edit the colours of the line-art layer where appropriate and finally, I'll adjust the colour scheme slightly by adding layers of colour or by editing the saturation."

## 06. KNOW THE MECHANICS

Luke Pearson is both a comic book artist and an illustrator, and he wrote as well as drew the *Hilda* series of comics, as well as the graphic novel *Everything We Miss*. He's well placed, therefore, to see how the different roles vary, and what skill sets are needed for each. "I think there are few qualities [for being a comic artist] that differ from those necessary for being an illustrator," he says. "Mainly you need to understand the basic language/workings of comics and how people read them, which doesn't have much to do with the art at all. How to arrange panels so that they're read in the right order, for instance. How to incorporate text without making it confusing or ugly. How to compose individual panels. That's where most people will trip up."

"There's more at stake drawing a comics panel than there is an illustration, in that an illustration can usually be ignored, but if a comics panel doesn't make sense or accidentally communicates the wrong thing, it can mess up the whole piece. If you're writing the comic as well then you also need to be able to tell a story and know which bits should be told and which bits should be shown. Everything else is pretty subjective and depends on the kind of comic you're making. You need to be able to draw but you don't need to have any particular taste or draw in a certain way."



© Luke Pearson/Nobrow Press



## 07. WORK WITH THE WRITER

Anthony Williams ([www.comicstripper.co.uk](http://www.comicstripper.co.uk)), who has worked for both Marvel and DC, believes the question of how to balance text and art is an interesting one because "more often than not the writer and the artist are two different people. Whether this is the case or not, good storytelling relies on a collaboration of ideas, words and visuals, and the most successful collaborations have a well-judged and complementary balance of text and art. I wouldn't like to ascribe one or the other as being better at conveying particular events or reveals as this would be too prescriptive. Writers are capable of painting pictures with their words and artists are capable of description and storytelling within their art. That said, I've always held to the maxim that you should be able to follow the basic narrative of a comic book story without the text in place."

## 08. EXPERIMENT

CHRISTIAN WARD IS WORKING WITH WRITER MATT FRACTION ON A NEW IMAGE COMIC BOOK, ENTITLED *ODY-C*



**Follow two plots:** *ODY-C* has multiple stories happening simultaneously, and Ward "wanted to see if [he] could show two sequences in the same space playing out at once."

**Choose your own adventure:** Ward wanted "a layout that allowed the reader to choose to read down the left side of the page or down the right side rather than just left to right."

**Try different techniques:** "I love laying several separate layers of colours on top of each other," says Ward, "experimenting with opacity and overlaying, colour burning, multiplying each layer to create interesting and often unexpected results. Although it'll often result in my work having sometimes up to a hundred layers, it always results in work retaining a sense of vibrancy and surprise."

**Push genre boundaries:** *ODY-C* is a retelling of *The Odyssey* as "gender-swapping hard science fiction."

**Go with the flow...** "I often just draw and see what I happens," says Ward. "If I see a random abstract shape forming as I draw (in the structure of a face for instance), I like to bring it out and make it apparent. I'm certainly less interested in presenting a realistic view of the world, rather one full of coloured shapes and patterns."

**...but leave a trail of breadcrumbs:** To make sure your experiment but don't get lost. Ward says: "Focus on the storytelling, and everything else will follow."



## 09. READ BETWEEN THE LINES

Award-winning manga artist Svetlana Chmakova ([www.svetlania.com](http://www.svetlania.com)) uses what she doesn't draw, as much as what she does. "Sometimes the reader's imagination is your most powerful storytelling tool," she explains. "I like to leave some scenes open-ended, where I would lead up to an event, and then cut to the next scene, maybe of the result, leaving the reader to imagine what happened in between. As long as the lead-up is clear, this trick can be far more effective than me laboriously drawing out a scene and risking missing the mark with an intended effect. The readers know best what they want to see there... That being said, I try not to cheat my audience out of cool scenes they'd rather see than imagine! You have to go by instinct, deciding what to draw, and what to leave out. Also, consider how much of your life you want to spend drawing any given story, then cut scenes accordingly."



## 10. EMBRACE NARRATIVE

"A good comic artist is someone who appreciates the need to balance the demands of storytelling with a desire to express oneself through an artistic discipline," says Anthony Williams. "There are many incredibly talented artists working in comics who fail to understand that the fundamental goal of the medium is to tell a compelling story. I have been guilty myself in the past of looking to draw exciting 'money' shots at the expense of the storytelling. A comic story is not a book of poster shots but a narrative, and great comic artists embrace that and express themselves through the telling of the story."

Panel rhythm is something that becomes instinctive, he adds: "For me the most enjoyable part of the process is thumb-nailing out the complete story. This is pure storytelling without the encumbrance of worrying about the quality of the art. I really enjoy developing the pacing, the composition and the story building."

## 11. PACE YOURSELF

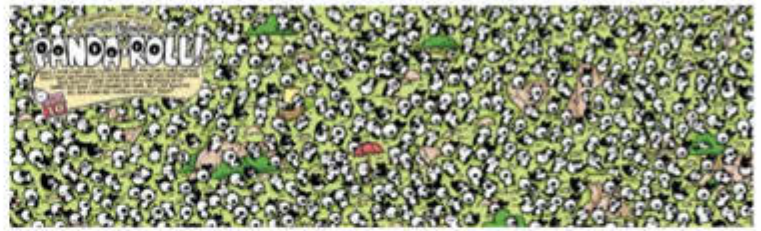
Comic, concept and cover artist David Nakayama ([www.davidnakayama.com](http://www.davidnakayama.com)) explains how important story structure and pacing is. "First and foremost," he says, "I like to define the key moments in each story and structure everything else around those. Reading over each page of the comic script, I figure out which beats have the most impact, both on a page-by-page basis and in the story overall. Then, during the drawing process, I do whatever I can to support this artistically. For example, I might make an important moment the biggest panel on the page, do something special with the panel framing, and/or concentrate extra rendering there – whatever it takes to draw the reader's eye where I want it to go."

"With the key moments accounted for, now I can worry about pacing the rest of the story. In general, more panels means SLOW and fewer panels means FAST, so in quiet, contemplative scenes, I'll generally use a lot of small panels to describe many smaller actions. Conversely, in an action-packed fight sequence, I'll do the opposite--just a few large panels to sell the speed and scale of the action at hand. In combination, you really get a sense of ebb and flow in the storytelling."



## 12. CONTROL MOOD WITH COLOUR

When you're drawing a comic – and even more so if you're writing it too – you're building a world. Not only do you want to tell a story in that world, but ideally you want to control how your reader feels about that story too. In that, colour is your best friend. "I like vibrant colours," says Mako Fufu. "So if it's a page of my webcomic or a random single-page story, I generally go for it (I need more white backgrounds to visually compensate, though). On longer stories, it usually depends on the mood I want to convey; what the story is about. If it's a more dramatic story, I would go for more sober tones, for example. An extreme variation in colour from one panel to another may indicate something that happened in the past, a dream, a fantasy, another dimension and so on. That stylistic device may also be applied to the borders or the page background, so the reader would perceive the difference without having any colouring change on the panels themselves."



© Jamie Smart/www.findchaffy.com

## 13. SEARCH FOR CHARACTER

For comic artists who work on kids' titles, the picture search is a tough challenge. Jamie Smart ([www.fumboo.com](http://www.fumboo.com)) worked on some called *Find Chaffy*. "I drew each search on an A2 sheet," he says, "filling every bit of space with characters. In the end I did about 20 of those, then went on to do a similar process for my picture search pages in *Doctor Who Adventures* magazine, and there have been over 50 of those. I loved doing it; there's something very absorbing about getting lost in the details of a really big piece of artwork, but I don't know if I'd want to repeat it. For all the fun, it made me a bit cross-eyed by the end."

Keeping characters consistent across pages is a challenge, as Smart explains: "Most characters are made up of basic shapes, and that varies for every artist. My basic shapes are circles for the heads, then a small lump for the body, and around that framework I can add limbs and faces and whatever else. Once you've found the shapes you like using, it only takes a bit of practice to ingrain that into your brain, and once it's there it just becomes habit." For Smart, the first step in a picture search image is to draw lots of "little scenes, certain characters doing certain things, randomly all over the page. Then slowly add more activity around each of those scenes, which then begins to connect the picture together. This one took about seven days," adds Smart, "but I've done so many now I've got it down to three (rather long) days."

## 14. FIND YOUR OWN PROCESS

### 01 | PLAN THE LAYOUT

Once Ward has read the script, his first step is to use Photoshop to design basic panel structure and layout. "I find that your own style is largely invisible to yourself," says Ward. "It simply is the way you draw, and it's easier to see mistakes or areas of improvement where other people see style."



### 02 | SCANNING AND PENCILLING

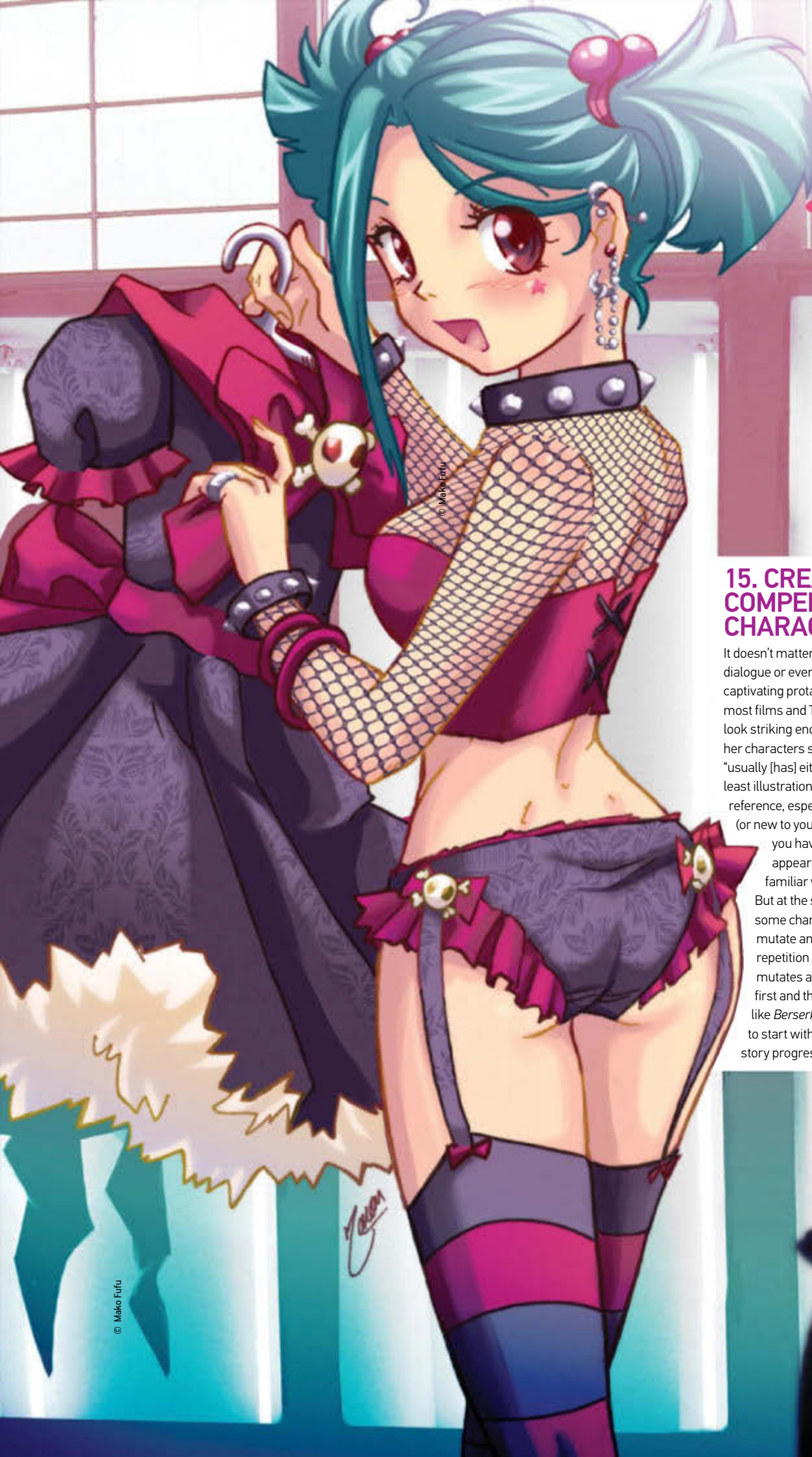
Based on the digital rough, Ward will produce rough pencils. Character consistency is important, but Ward thinks "character acting" is even more so: "I spend many hours staring at myself in Photo Booth pulling all sorts of faces. I think if you can nail a character's personality through evoking their emotions then the inconsistencies matter less. Once readers are connected emotionally with a character, they'll forgive the odd wonky nose."



### 03 | ANOTHER PASS, COLOUR PASS

Ward uses a light box to create a pass with tight and more finished pencils. After that, it's time to colour the image, which is almost all done in Photoshop. However, Ward notes: "I have a bank of watercolour paintings and textures that I cut up and layer onto gradients of colour to give the final pages more tension."





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## 15. CREATE COMPELLING CHARACTERS

It doesn't matter how good your art, your dialogue or even your story is if you haven't got a captivating protagonist to put on the page. As in most films and TV, it helps if they're active and look striking enough to be memorable. To keep her characters strong, Mako Fufu says she "usually [has] either some model sheets or at least illustrations of them; they are a good reference, especially when the character is new (or new to you), had a major transformation, or you have a large amount of characters appearing in the same comic. As you get familiar with the character, it gets easier. But at the same time you should allow some change since the character may mutate and evolve, because due to the repetition and practice your own style mutates and evolves. I enjoy comparing the first and the latest episodes from mangas like *Berserk*, where the artist was amazing to start with, and he got even better as the story progressed."

## 16. COVER YOURSELF

David Nakayama says, "When it comes to style, I'm sort of a weird case. I'm constantly playing with different styles – traditional comic line art, photoreal painting, bold graphic shapes – always trying to find the perfect custom look for each project I'm working on." And it's on the cover of comics that this look really has to come together.

"As a cover artist," says Nakayama, "I use colour in a few different ways. For one, colour can help with the separation of elements in your image, controlling how clearly it 'reads' for the viewer. Secondly, colour can establish an emotional tone. So red conveys heat, anger, and rolling motion, while cooler hues might give a sense of placidity or sadness. Lastly, colour helps to focus attention. For example, I like to save the brightest, most saturated colours for the most important area of the image. If surrounded by duller, less intense colours, the viewer's eye will naturally go right there... it's rare these days to have any text on the cover other than the logo. So it's sometimes possible to stand out simply by using a text element that's integrated into the art. That's always fun. In the case of interior panel art, I personally prefer to use text as a supporting device and let the art itself do most of the heavy lifting. Sometimes, a scene with no text at all can speak the loudest."



## 18. MAKE COLOUR COUNT

Daniel de Sosa admits: "I used to rely on colour to hide weak drawings and paper over cracks, but now I just use it to accentuate a piece. I mostly create work in black and white now, adding colour overlays in via Photoshop only towards the end of working on a piece. My comics improved a lot when I stopped using colour and focused only on creating pages in black and white, and I recommend this to all cartoonists who are just starting out. A piece should stand on its own without colour. My stance on colour also has to do with the fact that I self-publish most of my work, and printing in black and white costs a fraction of the cost that printing in full colour does. Basically, my view is if you are going to take the time to colour something, make it count."



## 17. COLLABORATE

The most challenging project Svetlana Chmakova has worked on was "the manga adaptation of James Patterson's *Witch & Wizard*. Not only because I had to fit an entire prose book per just one manga volume, but also because the settings were much more varied and different than what I would usually write for myself. This was a great opportunity for artistic growth, because I was challenged to draw things I normally would avoid!"

But even if Chmakova is working on her own project, the feedback of others is vital: "I start writing with concept sketches and snippets of dialogue, which I then shape and type up into a detailed script, complete with page breaks and scene descriptions. I then sketch the script out as storyboards/rough page layouts, so that I can get a feel for the visual flow of the story. I usually adjust the script a lot at this point, because what looks good in the script may not necessarily work as well visually. Once I am happy with my storyboard, I send it to my editor for feedback, and make further story adjustments as needed."



## 19. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

"Before starting the comic," says Daniel de Sosa, "it's good to have a model sheet worked out, where you draw the character from different angles, and work out various facial expressions. When designing a new character, I make sure to practise drawing them over and over in my sketchbook until I can get them consistent and have a good feel for showing their personality. These model sheets are also useful to compare character sizes and heights so that it stays consistent. Overall though, it is best not to worry too much about this. Storytelling trumps all, and the more you draw your character the more consistent they will become until eventually it will become second nature to you. Just look at Homer Simpson in the first episodes of *The Simpsons*, to how he appears today. He looks very, very different, but everyone still knows it's the same character."



## 20. BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

All creative endeavours require bravery, and a confidence that you have a story worth telling, and that the road you're going down is the right one. The great thing about comics is that you usually have a writer and an editor that you can bounce ideas off. But while many comics are created in collaboration, others are the product of a writer/artist, and that single vision can be a wonderful thing. "My webcomic is usually my most challenging project," says Mako Fufu. "There are a lot of stories that I want to tell, but since it's based on real-life events or things that go through my mind, sometimes it's hard to edit. It's also my own project so there's nobody to approve it for me, I have to decide by myself if this is effective on what I want to communicate or not. It takes some extra thinking, sketching and adjusting, but it gets done every time!"

It may be hard, but working alone does bring freedom: "If it's my own story, the script may change even after the coloring stage if I find it fitting," says Fufu. More importantly, her style is different and she is more sparing with text when she goes it alone: "When I work on my own projects and I have full control, I try not to have a lot of text on each panel, making it understandable without being redundant."

## 21. MAKE YOUR OWN RULES

All artforms have rules, and it pays to know them, but that doesn't mean you have to keep them. For instance, as Jamie Smart explains, "Panels are a great way to frame each scene or event, and to pace the story so it doesn't go too fast or skip anything important. But at the same time, panels are guidelines; they're rules to be broken, so it's a good idea to experiment with them and see what they can do. For example, you can stretch panels out, break them up, flow them in a direction, make a single panel into a whole page, or fill a page with loads of panels showing the same character's expression just to pace out a joke

at the end of it. I did one book where there were no panels at all, just individual drawings nestling next to each other on a page."

And Smart likes to find his own way when it comes to speech bubbles too, because "again, it's a case of finding your groove, and forming habits. My speech bubbles often wedge up into the top of a panel, leaving the rest of the space free for artwork. I always draw speech bubbles and art at the same time though – I know a lot of artists draw speech bubbles separately and then lay them over the art afterwards, but I prefer everything to be integrated together from the start."

## 22. POUR YOUR OWN PERSONALITY IN

My style is quite cutesy, humorous, often involving animals hitting each other," says Jamie Smart. "I try and make the whole comic funny, not just the final gag panel, so the premise, the characters and the story all need to be silly and make me laugh. I have quite a short attention span, so if it bores me, then I figure it will bore the audience and I don't draw it. Look at the comics you enjoy and try and see what's working for you – maybe it's how an

artist draws their character's eyes, or how they show motion, or just the funny language they use. These ideas will absorb into your own style and all contribute towards making your own comics unique and brilliant.

"And finally, draw comics because you love to do them. Don't draw them for an audience, but instead draw the things that make YOU laugh. Then you'll find you are always drawing the best comics."





## 24. MAKING MANGA

"After the storyboard is completed and I am confident that the story and layout are working," says Svetlana Chmakova, "I enlarge my storyboard sketches and use them as a base for pencilling the actual pages. I used to pencil completely digitally, using the Photoshop brush tool, but the last few years I've gone back to HB pencil on inkjet paper and only use Photoshop to sketch out the really complex and tricky scenes (so that I can use the layers function to help me out!) Once I have my pencilled pages, I scan them into Photoshop and use the Hue/Saturation functions to convert them to a light non-photo blue colour. I then print them out at inking size (on B4 paper), ink with Sakura Micron pigment liners and a Pentel pocket brush, and scan them back as black and white art (the blue lines do not scan at all with this setting, so I get a crisp ink scan). Screentoning I usually do in Deleter ComicWorks and Manga Studio, but if there is any colour, I usually paint in Photoshop."

© Svetlana Chmakova

## 23. BE READY, BE OPEN, BE FLEXIBLE

"Draw from life," says Anthony Williams, in wise words for any type of artist. "Don't just reference other comic artists. Study illustrators from other disciplines. Be a constant student of visual storytelling in its many forms, whether it be print, film or theatre. Above all, keep drawing, and if you really want to break into comics, build a body of your best and most competent work for your portfolio. If you get the opportunity to show it to

someone in the profession, be open to their advice and criticism."

And if you want to work, be flexible. Williams says he has the "ability to adapt to the job in hand. My style is determined by the particular commission, and I really enjoy the ability to dramatically switch gears depending on the demands of a particular job. The one thing that is constant no matter what style, is telling exciting, dynamic stories."

## 25. PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

For Luke Pearson, panel rhythm "varies massively depending on what I want to convey. I guess an example would be that if it's an action scene, something new will be happening in each panel. I'll keep the dialogue down and keep extraneous details to a minimum so that you don't linger too long on a particular panel. For quieter, more introspective scenes, I might spread a character's action out over a series of panels, or explore the environment a bit more, dragging things out to keep you on that page and give the impression of time moving slowly. I like to do big, full bleed establishing shots to give a good sense of the setting before I spend the scene more concerned

with close-ups and the characters' interactions." And when it comes to words, "The main thing to avoid is having the text say what the art is showing. It's usually best if neither works without the other, or if the text adds subtext to a seemingly straightforward image. I find you can get away without much text at all. There are plenty of comics that eschew text altogether and still tell a clear story. But then I tend to use text as sparingly as possible because I'm aware that I'm not a 'writer' and it's the part I feel most self-conscious about. Comics made with a writer/artist partnership tend to be a lot more text-heavy for obvious reasons."



© Luke Pearson/Nobrow Press



**OUR EXPERT**

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Canavan is the art director at Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin, and a freelance illustrator when he gets a spare minute.

# MASTER REAL PAINT EFFECTS

CREATE A FANTASTICAL DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION  
USING TRADITIONAL PAINTING TECHNIQUES

**T**raditional paintings are exciting. They evoke energy, texture, dedication and passion. Through this tutorial, you'll learn how to paint an exciting fantasy illustration using only Photoshop, a graphics tablet and some imagination. No paint mess, turpentine spillage or sitting around waiting for your canvas to dry, just textured strokes and well-thought-out, bold colour choices that make people go "ooh".

Using reference correctly is one of the keys to becoming a successful artist, and something we'll cover in this tutorial. Through studying the

fundamentals, in particular composition, anatomy and colour theory, you can expand your visual libraries and improve the ideas you put down on paper. In order to prepare for a new painting, you should first research the topic; find images that relate to the subject matter and study them. Treat them as a resource to examine whenever you get stuck or need to reference directly. Before you begin, grab some images of paintings you like and look at how the artists applied paint; that's what you want to emulate here.



## WORK IN PROGRESS FROM SKETCH TO POLISHED PAINTING



Progress 1: Getting started



Progress 2: Painting details from reference



Progress 3: Finishing touches



## 01 COLLECTING REFERENCES

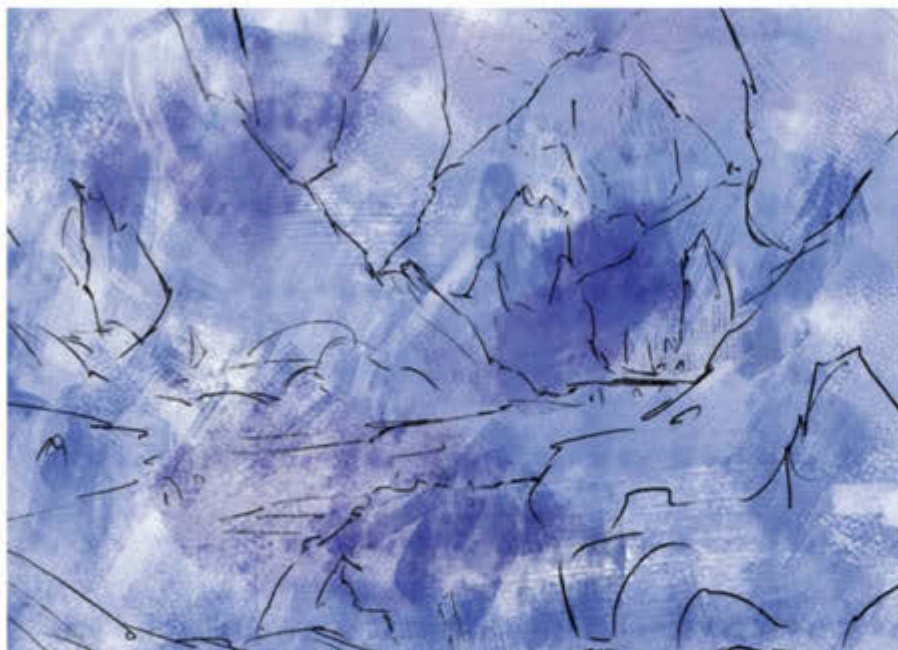
Start by collecting references. These can be photographs relating to aspects of the image, for example skies, landscapes and waterfalls, or paintings that match the mood you want to create. Because we're going for a traditional look here, you could include work by painters such as John Singer Sargent, Thomas Cole and modern artists like Jaime Jones. Create a new document in Photoshop and simply drag your references in, arranging them to your liking. Save this file to refer to later.



## 02 CREATE AN UNDERPAINTING

In traditional painting, artists sometimes create an underpainting as a base for subsequent layers of paint. This technique applies nicely to digital painting; if you allow breathing room between your strokes, you'll get some of that colour and texture showing through. Create a new document at A3 size. Choose a colour that contrasts with your palette; in this case we used blue tones. Grab your favourite textured brush and start loosely filling the canvas! There's no need to be clean here – you want those imperfections.

“Take your time and really think about each stroke you are applying”



## 03 SKETCH!

Having spent some time absorbing your reference images and scribbling in a notebook, you should have a good idea of what you want to draw. Create a new layer above the underpainting and get scribbling. Think about the composition; you want to lead the viewer's eyes through the painting. The best way to do this is to use lines that lead directly to the focal point, in this case the mountain, and to use colour and value contrast to pop it out. Don't worry about being clean and careful, as you'll be deleting this layer later!



## 04 START PAINTING

Choose a textured brush and reduce the flow to around 50% – this will apply less 'paint' with each brush stroke. Take your time and really think about each stroke you are applying; you want to leave some spaces between marks to let that lovely underpainting show through. Colour choice is important, as it'll help drive the viewer through the image. The sky defines the palette of the whole painting, so paint that with yellows, oranges and other warm colours, while the rest of the image will take on some colder blue tones.

## ■ QUICK TIP

Learn layer masks! Masks allow you to control transparency simply by painting in black and white. They're great for adding texture, blending layers or making adjustments that don't affect the whole image. Instead of using the Eraser, just go to Layer>Layer Mask>From Transparency and experiment... you won't go back!



## 05 FOCUS ON BIG SHAPES

At this stage of the painting you don't want to get caught up in details. By focusing on big shapes you'll be able to cover the canvas quickly, which makes it easier to see if the composition and values are working. Use big brushes when you are blocking the forms in, around 300 pixels plus at times! Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as you can still use Photoshop's toolset to help you out here (the Eraser is your friend, but remember to switch the default brush it uses to a textured one!).



## 06 LIGHT AND RENDERING

With the painting blocked out, you can start to think about how light affects the environment. Use the Eyedropper tool (I) to select colours from the sky, then paint highlights where they would naturally fall. A nice balance of shadows and highlights will create interest, so bear that in mind when you paint the rocks. Match your stroke direction to the shape of the object you are painting to enhance the 3D effect: paint mountains with vertical strokes, curve around forms and then move to horizontals when you get to the ground.



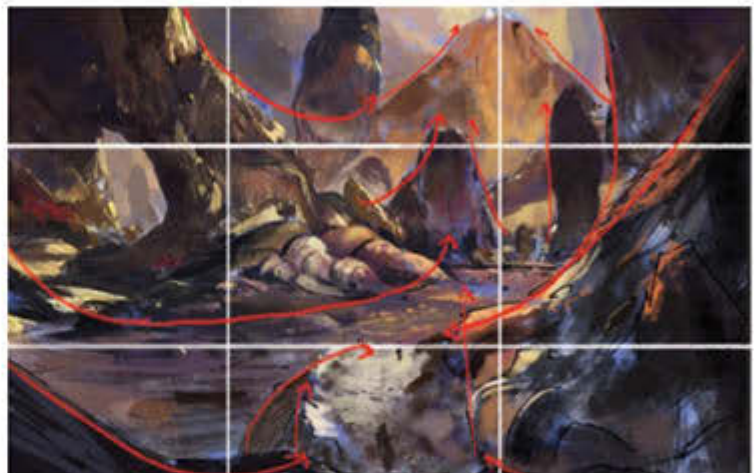
## 07 DON'T ZOOM IN!

A good chunk of the hard work is done at this stage, but resist the urge to zoom in and start adding details! Work at 50% zoom or less until near the end; if you start detailing too early it's easy to lose control of the composition. A strong painting should read and be interesting to look at as a thumbnail image; frequently zoom right out to check the composition is working, or alternatively open a navigator window by going to Window>Navigator in the top toolbar.



## 08 USE YOUR REFERENCES

To create realistic, tangible forms in your environment, you can reference photographs directly. To do this, open the reference file you created in step 1 and place the image beside your canvas. Treat sections of your painting as mini studies to help you define areas such as the rocks. Try to learn while you work; pay close attention to the way light and shadows fall over the stone, but bear in mind that this might be different to the palette and lighting you are painting!



## 09 COMPOSITION TIPS

This is an example of the flow through the painting. White lines indicate the rule of thirds, a commonly used composition breakdown in which you place items of interest on the lines and in particular where they intersect. You can see in this image that the focal point sits on an intersection and a line, while the character sits dead centre in the lower horizontal. The red lines indicate how the rock shapes are intended to drive your eyes through the painting.



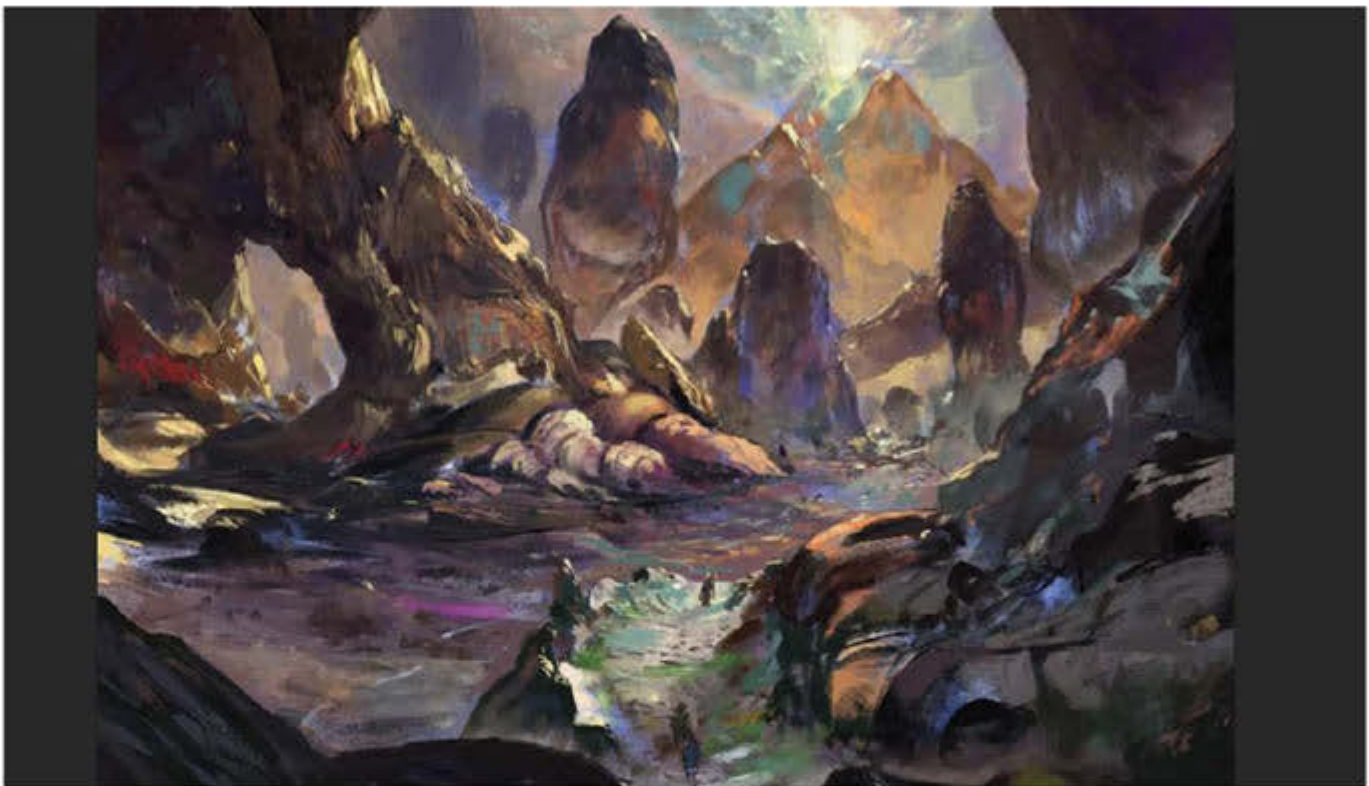
## 10 | ADDING DETAIL

With most of the elements of the painting blocked in nicely, it's time to focus on individual areas. Bring your attention over to any part of the image you think is lacking and start to render it out. Remember, you aren't going for incredible detail here, more the illusion of detail; you want to save areas of highest detail for your focal points. Change your brushes frequently to add varied texture to the painting and don't be afraid to be bold with your brush strokes.



## 11 | CLOUD RENDERING

To paint the clouds, use a hard square brush to lay in the forms in combination with the Smudge tool to soften and stretch the undersides. The mixture of hard and soft edges lends believability and weight to the shapes even though they're still quite abstract. The Smudge tool can be used for painting rocks and other forms too – experiment with different brushes in conjunction with it! John Silva has some fantastic smudge tool presets available at <http://johnsilva.deviantart.com>.



## 12 | ATMOSPHERE

A nice way to separate the elements of your painting and give the illusion of depth is to add atmospheric fog or haze. Take a large soft brush set to low opacity (10-20%) and select a light tone from the sky. Use this to gently paint in atmosphere behind the rocks to separate them from each other, increasing in thickness as you recede back through the image. Erase or use a layer mask to tidy this layer up when you are finished; less is more.

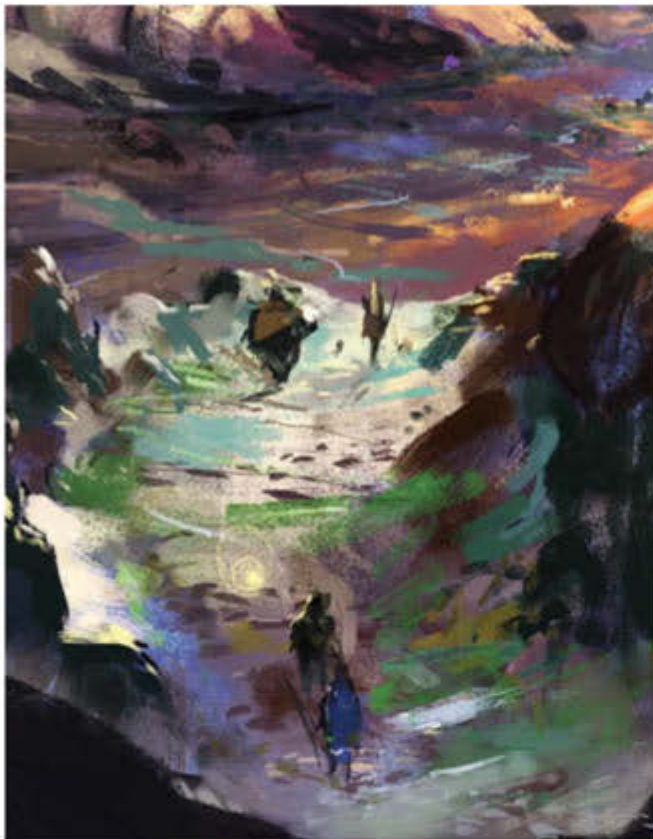


### 13 CHECK YOUR VALUES

Now that you're nearing the finish line, it's a good time to check your values – essentially to look at the image in black and white so you can see how well it reads. Go to Layer>New Adjustment Layer and select Hue/Saturation. Slide the Saturation slider to -100. Remember – you want your focal point to pop out, so increase the contrast in those areas using the Dodge and Burn tools sparingly, or by adding a Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer in the same manner as before.

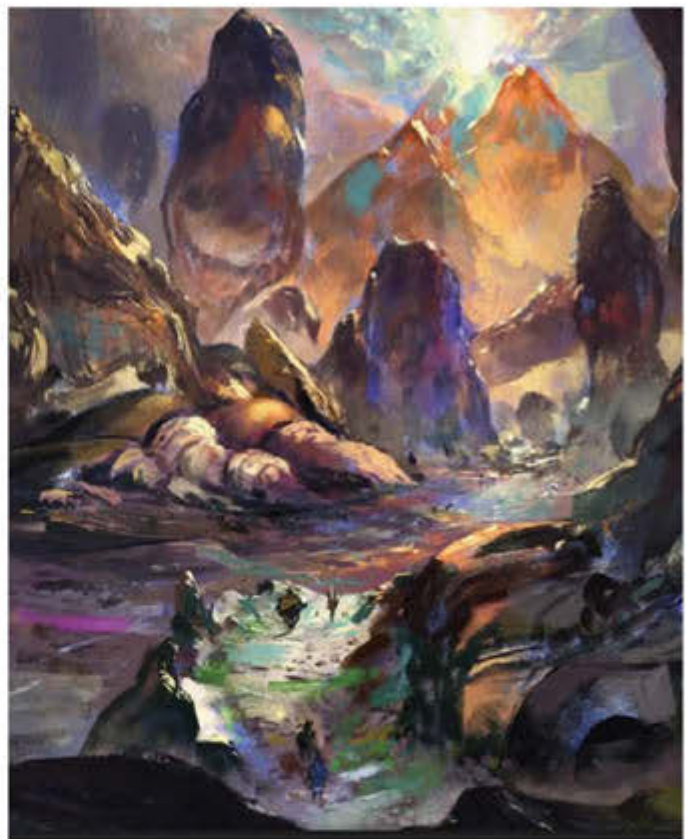
#### ■ QUICK TIP

Take breaks! It's important to rest your mind every hour or so, both to maintain energy levels and to return to the image with fresh eyes. Often you'll notice glaring errors when you take even a short break, which you might have missed otherwise.



### 14 CHARACTER PAINTING

Save the best until last – it's time to look at the characters! Striking the balance of adding detail without ruining the painterly effect isn't easy, so try to be bold with your strokes and feel out the shapes. Adding little elements like the ball of light, interesting clothing designs and poses will help add story to your painting. Think about who the characters are, where are they going, what this world is. The more thought you put into the designs in your painting, the more exciting it'll be for viewers.



### 15 FINISHING TOUCHES

Use adjustment layers to fine-tune your painting. Bring the saturation up slightly using Hue/Saturation and adjust contrast with a Levels adjustment layer. Use the Color Balance adjustment to add yellows (+8) to the highlights and blue (+20) to the midtones; experiment with these settings until you get the overall colour tones you desire. As with the atmosphere, less is more when it comes to adjustments. Apply some Sharpening (Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask) to the final image to pop out some of the texture detail and you're done!



# PRODUCE GAME ART

FLESH OUT A FULLY RENDERED CONCEPT CHARACTER USING CUSTOM BRUSHES AND ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

**W**hether it's for games or for movies, there are no rules when it comes to creating character concept art. You can use any tool within your grasp in order to augment your painting process and to flesh out your character as your imagination tells you. When doing work of this kind, Photoshop comes in handy. Here, you will be taking advantage of its power in order to create a fully rendered character concept that isn't simply a snapshot.

This tutorial will cover the complete painting process. You will use different tools and techniques

to paint a female character who could be the protagonist in an action game – a femme fatale inspired by the likes of Chun-Li. You will learn to develop the picture from a rough thumbnail sketch and discover how this task can be done with the use of custom brushes and blending modes. Some of the brushes you'll use here mimic traditional media to a certain extent and will be very useful in adding textures to the piece. You'll also make use of adjustment layers and filters that can influence the overall mood and atmospheric perspective of the picture.

## START WITH STUDIES

CREATE SKETCHES THAT WILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE ENTIRE PROCESS

### 01 TONAL THUMBNAILS

Regardless of how detailed you plan your artwork to be, always begin by creating tonal thumbnails. The purpose of this step is to make quick compositions that will help determine which pose and what kind of lighting will work best. It doesn't have to be polished. You just have to make sure there is ample distinction between the figure and the background.

### 02 COLOUR THUMBNAIL

Once you're happy with your tonal thumbnail, start adding colours. There are several ways to do this. You can either set your tonal thumbnail as a Multiply layer then paint underneath, or just paint on a layer with the blending mode set to Color, or simply paint over it. You can also do a combination of all those methods.



### 03 TIGHT LINE SKETCH

The thumbnails will serve as guides when rendering the piece. After making them, the next task is to finalise the form of the figure by creating a tight sketch. Use any hard-edged brush to draw the figure as you would using pen on paper. Make use of the Line tool to create straight lines.



#### OUR EXPERT

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JB Casacop is a mobile games designer by day and a fantasy illustrator by night. He has made dozens of artworks for games like *Star Wars LCG* and *Warhammer: Invasion*.

#### SOURCE FILES

Provided online at [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) are Jan Ditlev Christensen's fine art brushes that behave like traditional brushes. Other brushes used in this tutorial can be downloaded from <http://danluvisiart.deviantart.com/art/My-Brush-Pack-118954791> and [www.ramonmiranda.com/2010/04/photoshop-artistic-oils-brushkit.html](http://www.ramonmiranda.com/2010/04/photoshop-artistic-oils-brushkit.html).

### WORK IN PROGRESS

BUILD UP FROM A ROUGH SKETCH



Progress 1: Create quick thumbnail sketches



Progress 2: Add colours



Progress 3: Finishing touches



**04 | SEPARATION OF ELEMENTS** Now you need to separate the picture's elements using silhouettes. Use the Pen tool to select each element, such as the figure, then fill them with any colour. Make sure each selection is made on a different layer. Duplicate the line art layer on top of each silhouette. Ctrl/right-click on each line art layer and select Create Clipping Mask. Alternatively, you can just put the mouse cursor between the line layer and the silhouette then Opt/Alt-click.

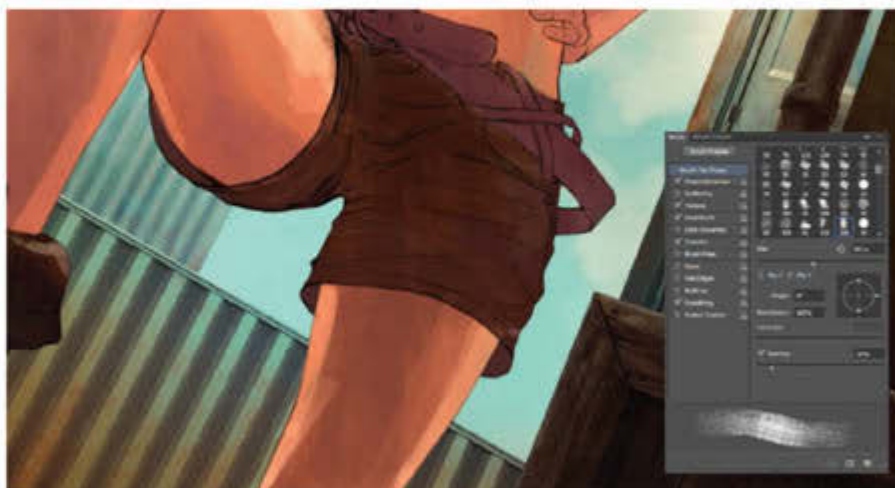
**07 | INITIAL BACKGROUND ENHANCEMENTS** Now that you've rendered the background, you'll need to create two new layers on top of it. Change the blending mode of the first one to Color Burn and the other to Color Dodge. Use an airbrush to enhance contrast and colours. This method, while less automated compared to using a filter or an adjustment layer, provides greater control because it allows you to choose specific areas to darken, lighten, or intensify. Having these enhancements on separate layers makes the file more editable.



**05 | BROAD STROKES** With each element separated into individual layers, your next step would be to introduce colours using broad brush strokes. Before painting on a selected layer, click Lock Transparent Pixels. This will ensure that the silhouette of that layer is preserved. There is no need to be concerned about polishing at this point. You will revisit each element later after the basic colours have been laid out. This is where the colour thumbnail becomes useful as it can be used as a guide in this step.

**■ QUICK TIP** Aside from brushes, having a library of royalty-free textures is also beneficial. You can use them in conjunction with the brushes you download or perhaps even make your own custom tools out of them. This will make painting in Photoshop even more efficient and enjoyable for you.

**08 | ADDING TEXTURE** One of our objectives is to visually convey an idea. Keep in mind that no matter which style or genre you've chosen for your painting, it has to be believable. Even if your painting is stylised as opposed to photorealistic, there are still merits in adding details such as textures that make the artwork all the more convincing. It's a good idea to build up a library of free textured brushes that can be downloaded online, such as Ramon Miranda's Artistic Oils Brushkit (link provided).



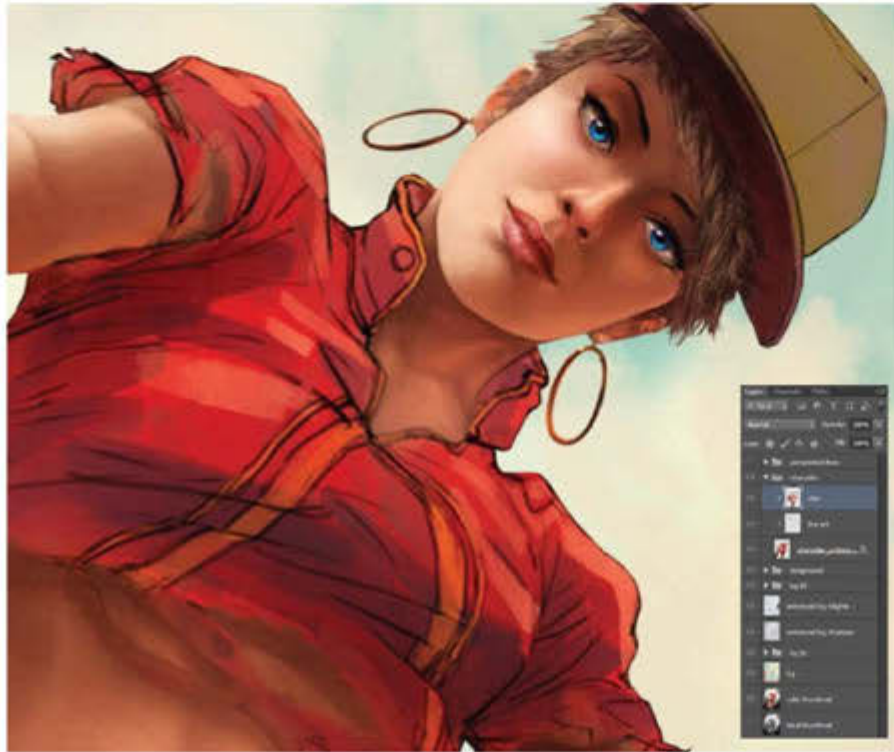
**06 | RENDERING THE BACKGROUND** One of the better approaches to painting, be it digital or traditional, is to render the most distant elements first. In this case, it's best to begin with the sky and the shipment containers behind the character. Use Jan Ditlev Christensen's fine art brushes (provided online) for the hard surfaces. For the clouds, use Dan Luvisi's custom brush pack (link provided). To control the 'amount of paint' in each stroke, access brush presets and set Opacity and Flow jitter to Pen Pressure.

## BRING YOUR PAINTING TO LIFE

USE DETAIL TO EMPHASISE KEY ELEMENTS IN YOUR WORK

### 09 RENDERING SKIN

After fine-tuning the background, it's finally time to render the character. Start with the skin. Concentrate on the facial region first. Her face is the part you have to pay extra attention to because it's the one that tells the most about her mood and character. When rendering skin, use hard-edged round brushes and airbrushes without any texture settings in order to achieve a soft and smooth kind of finish. This will also improve the distinction between her and the background that consists of hard and rough surfaces.



### 11 DO THE FLIP TRICK

Sometimes, there are errors in your painting that only become evident once you see a mirror image of it. Flipping your image exposes any awkward placement of elements or errors in proportion. To perform this checking method, click the top-most visible layer in the Layers panel then stamp visible layers by pressing Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E. This will create a flat layer that you can easily flip using the Transform command. You can now look at your art from a fresh perspective.



### 12 PLACE DECALS

By definition, decals are labels that can be transferred to a surface from specially prepared paper. They are commonly used in scale modelling. In the digital arts industry though, decal also serves as an informal term used by artists to denote any graphic element that is prepared separately before being integrated into another artwork. By using the Rectangular Marquee and the Type tool, you can create simple logos that can be used as decorative details. To integrate them into the painting, use a combination of Transform tools and painting-over.



### 10 CHECK FROM AFAR

There are still certain methods in traditional painting that should be kept in mind. You shouldn't fixate too much on the details. As in traditional painting, you must look at your work from a distance every once in a while to check the general composition. Clicking Window>Arrange>New Window for [filename] will allow you to have any number of extra views of your painting. By having these extra windows, you can evaluate how much the painting is being changed by the details you're currently working on.

“Sometimes, there are errors in your painting that only become evident once you see a mirror image of it”



### 13 CREATE PATTERNS ON THE CLOTHES

In traditional painting, you can add patterns on drapery by either making use of stencils or by doing so manually. Both methods can be quite laborious. Thankfully, Photoshop offers a certain solution. Make use of the Pen tool or the Lasso tool to isolate a portion of the character's clothes. Colourise your selection using a Gradient Map which can be accessed by clicking Image>Adjustments. In a nutshell, Gradient Maps allow you to apply different colours to different values in your images, making them ideal for patterns on folded drapery.

## COMPLETE YOUR PAINTING

### FINAL ENHANCEMENTS AND POST-PROCESSING

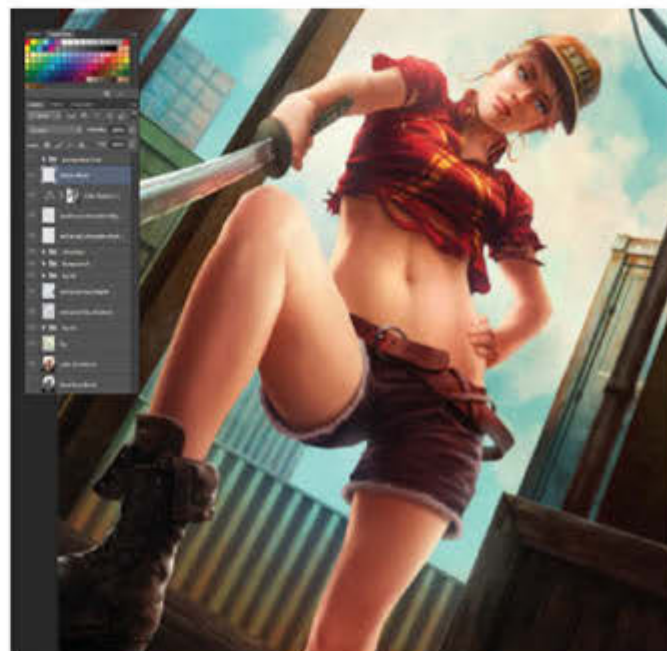
#### 14 ENHANCEMENTS ON THE CHARACTER

Similar to the process done after painting the background earlier, make use of a Color Dodge and a Color Burn layer to enhance the values and hues of the character. Since the background consists primarily of greens and blues, you should accentuate the character further by using warmer colours. With soft brushes, apply some red-orange hues along the edges of the character on the Color Dodge layer. Then, for the shadow enhancements, apply some light greys and various shades of purple on the Color Burn layer.



#### 15 GENERAL COLOUR ADJUSTMENTS

Once you've painted all elements, care must be given to ensure that all elements look like they belong in one scene. This is where adjustment layers come in handy. In this case, use Color Balance to simultaneously adjust the hues of the character and the background. Naturally, certain hues will be pushed too much as a result. To remedy this, apply some black paint to the layer mask that comes with the adjustment layer. This will allow you to 'erase' parts you don't want the adjustment layer to influence or affect.



#### THERE ARE NO RULES, ONLY TOOLS

This tutorial shows but a few approaches to creating a concept character. There are an infinite number of ways to come up with the effects in the painting we have here. You can spend a lot of time in the line art phase by checking proportions there and finalising the anatomy instead of just making corrections in post-production. You can make use of royalty-free photos instead of manually painting textures, or use the Smudge tool to blend your colours instead of relying on Pen Pressure settings. Don't be afraid to experiment. It's still the best way to get oriented.

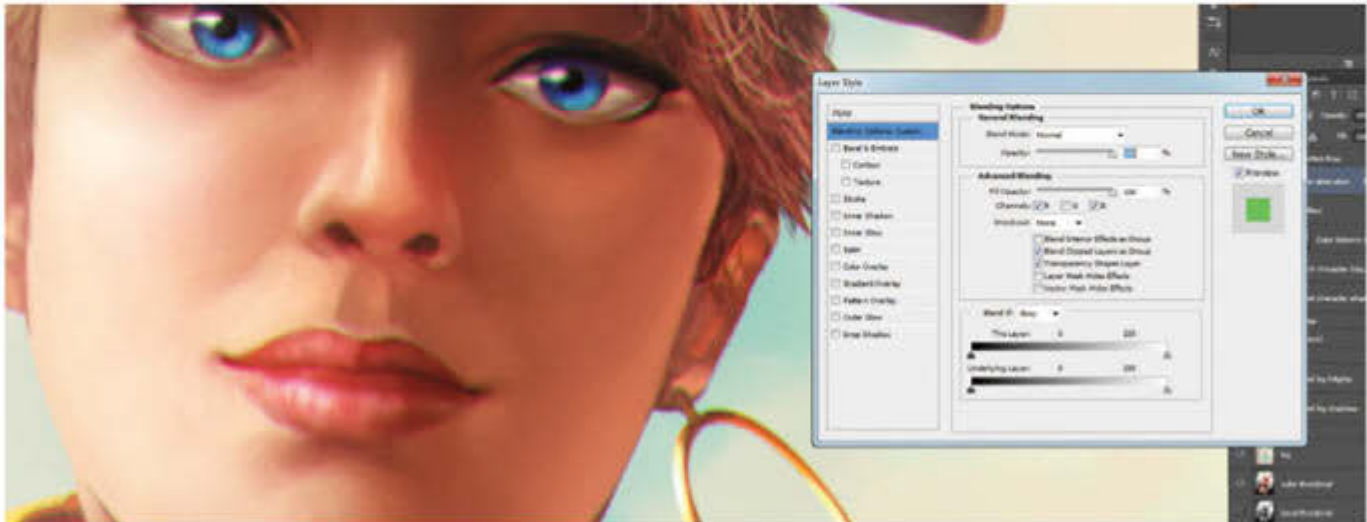
#### 16 ATMOSPHERIC EFFECTS

The last step in this tutorial that would involve the use of brushes would be the addition of atmospheric effects such as bloom. Bloom is an effect in which the light extends beyond the borders of bright areas in the picture. To add this particular effect, you will simply need to create a new layer and set its blending mode to Screen. Then you will need to make use of an airbrush to lightly paint those light fringes. Take care not to overdo it though, as you don't want any part of the background to be too washed out.



## 17 CHROMATIC ABERRATION

Chromatic aberration is actually a form of distortion caused by camera lenses that photographers attempt to correct. This can be avoided altogether in digital painting since you're not using a camera. It can also be deliberately added to make your painting look a little less artificial. To do this, stamp visible layers then Ctrl/ right-click to access Blending Options. In the menu that pops up, just uncheck any of the three channels. After closing the menu, use the Move tool (V) to slightly reposition the layer to simulate chromatic aberration.

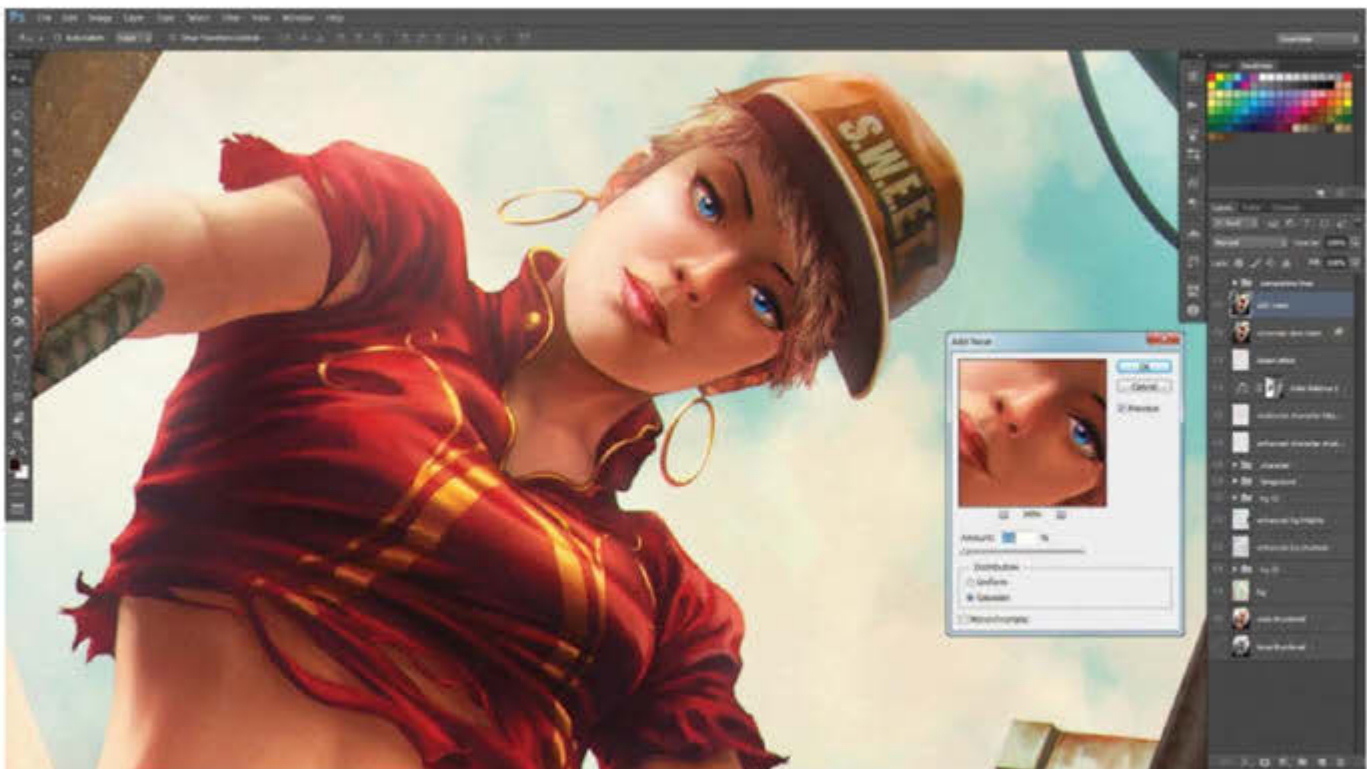


### ■ QUICK TIP

Learn how to use various adjustment layers to your advantage. When you are working in the game industry, you never know what changes your clients or art directors might request. Oftentimes, you'll be expected to make those revisions quickly, so you need to have as much control as possible.

## 18 FINISH WITH A BIT OF NOISE

The finishing touch would be to make use of a noise filter on your painting. You may consider this step optional if you want to go for a smooth kind of look. Some artists do this extra step in order to keep their paintings from appearing too computer-perfect. It creates a subtle change that probably won't matter if your image is intended to be scaled down during print or for use on a website. In this example, an Amount of 2.5% was used for the Add Noise filter.





# CREATE A STAINED GLASS EFFECT

USE COLOURING TECHNIQUES AND BLENDING MODES TO MIMIC STREAMING LIGHT

**S**tained glass is a beautiful art form that has graced the windows of many important buildings throughout history. It is the art of light and colour, and was originally used as a way to convey ideas and stories in a time when most people were illiterate. But visual storytelling was beloved and widely understood.

As time passed, stained glass art took on new meaning and life, but remained equally beautiful and appreciated. In this tutorial, you will learn how to

digitally re-create the illusion of glass and light in Photoshop. Before diving right in, it is important to know and understand the art form that you will be trying to mimic. Take some time to research stained glass and the way it is made. Find some reference material and begin thinking about the illustration you want to put into glass. As you look for reference material, notice the shapes and forms created by the glass and the way that the light affects it. Once you have done a bit of research, it is time to begin.



## OUR EXPERT

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Gill is a professional 2D artist who has been working in the videogame and animation industry for three years.

## ■ PREPARING THE BASE

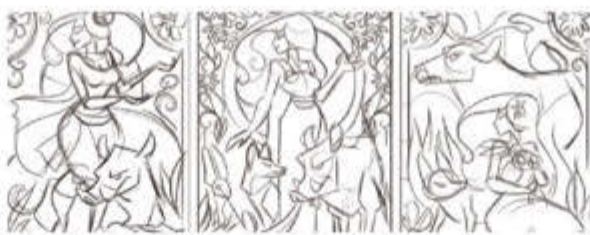
IMPORT THE RENDER PASSES AND CUT OUT THE PLANES

### 01 | CREATE THUMBNAILS

Before you begin, it is a good idea to look up stained glass work as a point of reference. After establishing your reference and becoming familiar with the overall look and composition style, create a new document. From the menu bar go to Layer>New>Layer and draw out several thumbnail sketches to explore your composition.

### 02 | BUILD UP YOUR SKETCH

Select and copy your thumbnail. Create a new layer and paste your thumbnail on the new layer. Using Edit>Transform>Scale, scale your sketch to fill your canvas. Then set the layer Opacity to 50%. This sketch will now act as a rough guide as you move forward to a more detailed sketch.



### 03 | CREATE THE ROAD MAP

With your thumbnail sketch in place, create a new layer on top to begin outlining a more detailed drawing. This is the time to make sure your composition is working well and that your subject or figures are fully fleshed out. At this phase the line work can still be rough if desired.

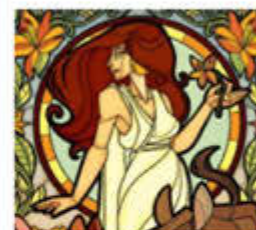


## ■ WORK IN PROGRESS

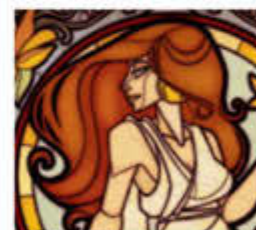
FROM START TO FINISH



Progress 1: Create the linework



Progress 2: Lay in your colours



Progress 3: Create the illusion of glass

## 04 BEGIN THE LINE WORK

Create a new layer. With a hard brush, begin laying down solid, clean lines. Set your background layer to a neutral colour that suits you (like grey). Stained glass work typically uses a very graphic or geometric shape language, so keep this in mind as you begin to tie down your forms. While some large shapes are good to have, it is also a good idea to break down those shapes into smaller chunks. When creating those smaller elements, try to have those new shapes help define the form.



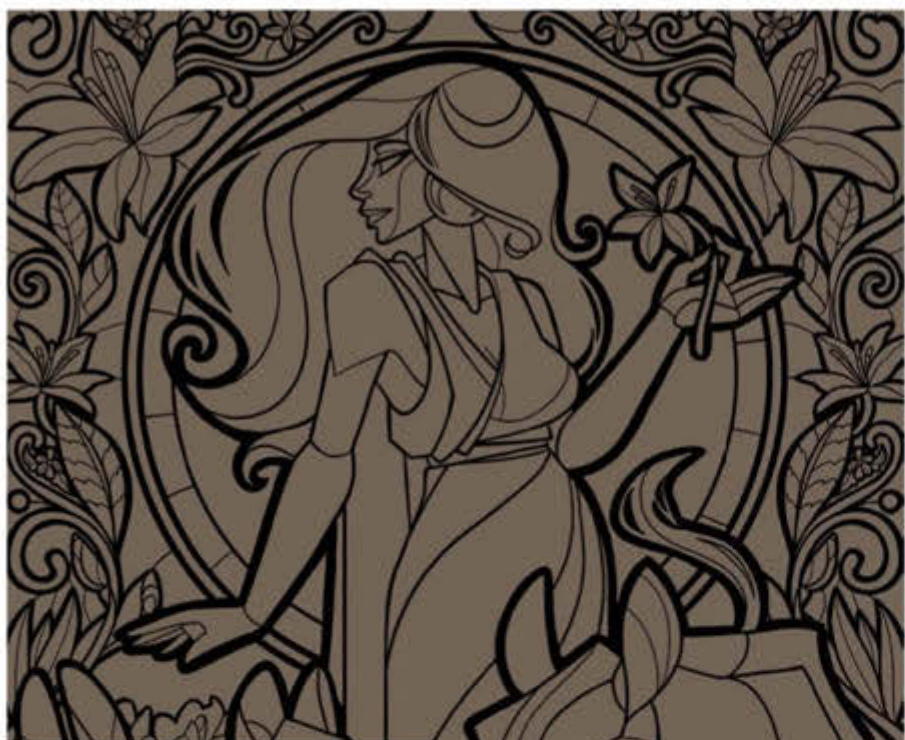
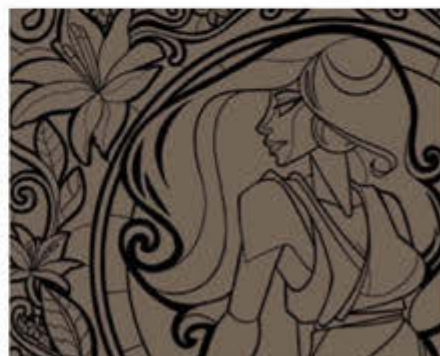
## 05 LINE QUALITY AND WEIGHT

Zoom in and work close to your lines. This will help keep the lines from getting jittery, remaining clean and free of mistakes as you work. Line weight is also important to consider. The lines inside a figure or form, those used to define folds, shadows, seams, and the like, should be thinner than the lines used around a figure. Creating a thicker line around a figure will bring the subject forward and help keep everything within those lines reading as a cohesive whole.



## 06 BRING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

In traditional stained glass, every piece of glass is soldered together, so your lines must also reflect those connections. After you have inked all of your figures, there are sections of the composition that will need to be tied together by creating these thin lines. For this illustration, the sky and circle are large areas of free-floating shapes. Break down those shapes into smaller ones where needed to make sense for your illustration. These smaller sections will also allow for more colour variety later on.



## 07 FINAL LINE WORK

As you finish your line work, zoom out to make sure that everything is reading clearly. While it is nice to have lots of detail, you also want to have larger areas of rest. This is important for your main figures because they should be easily recognised and pop off the background. If there are any issues, now is the time to make those fixes. If everything is readable and clean then it is time to move on to the colouring stage.

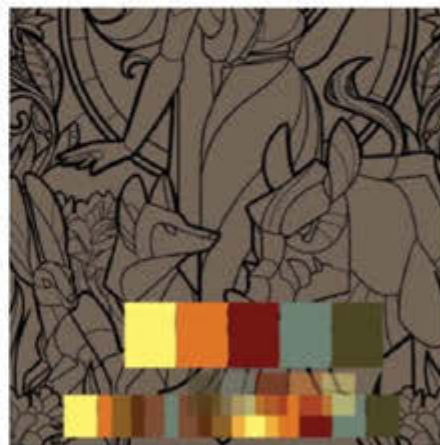


### ■ QUICK TIP

You can quickly explore colours by creating swatches and duplicating them out on new layers. Then adjust those layers' opacities and location in order to see a wider range of colours that work together. Try layers at 20, 50, and 75% Opacity and move around your colour combinations.

## 08 CHOOSE YOUR COLOURS

Generally, it is a good idea to keep your colour palette small; anywhere from three to five colours. This illustration uses five basic colours. However, by simply taking two colours and finding the values and hues between them, you can get a wide range of colour variety while maintaining an overall colour scheme. For example, while orange is already one of the main colours chosen, you can get a different shade of orange by taking the red and colouring over it with the yellow that is at 50% Opacity.



## ■ FINDING THE COLOURS

CHOOSING A COLOUR THEME AND DIRECTION

### 09 | ADD A BASE COLOUR

Create a new layer under your line work layer. This will be your colour layer. Select a base colour that works for your illustration and fill the layer using the Paint Bucket tool. You can also add a gradient to add some variation as you begin to paint on top.



**001 | FINDING THE COMPOSITION**  
Finding a balanced composition and appropriate style is key, and the foundation to any good illustration

**002 | MAKING YOUR MARK**  
Clean line work and strategic line weight can help pull the figures together and keep them from getting lost

**003 | MOVING FORWARD**  
Next is to lay down the colours and to move towards giving off the feeling of light



### 11 | FINISH THE FLAT COLOURS

During most of the colouring stage, you can treat your illustration like a colouring book, painting under your line layer until most of the composition is filled in with flat colours. Now is a good point to stop and make sure that you are satisfied with the colours you have chosen. Keep in mind that as you progress, certain layer effects will begin to alter the colours of your work. Later on, there will be another opportunity to adjust the colours as a whole once the final illustration is nearly complete.



### 12 | ADD THE ILLUSION OF LIGHT

With the final colours done, find a soft, round brush. Using the Eyedropper tool, select colours from your illustration. Go back in and focus on large areas such as the hair. Find a lighter colour and lightly touch the centre of the piece. This will help give the feeling that light is filtering through the centre. Choose hotter, bright colours for this task. You can lower the opacity on your brush if it helps you build up an interesting texture. This can be done on a separate layer if desired.



### 10 | VARIATION IN VALUE

Adding variation to similar neighbouring colours will help give a nice feel to your illustration. While it is not always necessary (such as the robe on the female figure) it can really help for other larger areas such as the sky. Blues that are very similar but may be slightly darker or more saturated than the ones next to them helps sell the illusion of arranged glass. If a stained glass artist were using blue glass shards, not all blues would have turned out the same during the glass-making process.

“Adding variation to similar neighbouring colours will help give a nice feel to your illustration”



### 13 | SOFT LIGHT

Create a new layer above your colour layer. In the Layers window, set the blending mode of this new layer to Soft Light and lower the Opacity as needed. Just like in the previous step, find a soft, round brush and select a warm colour. Go back through and hit the centre areas once again. This gives them just a bit more warmth and a glow from their cores. Doing this again on another layer adds more variation in texture and allows you to make edits and adjustments as needed for your particular illustration.

## CREATING THE ILLUSION

GIVING YOUR ILLUSTRATION THE FEELING OF LIGHT

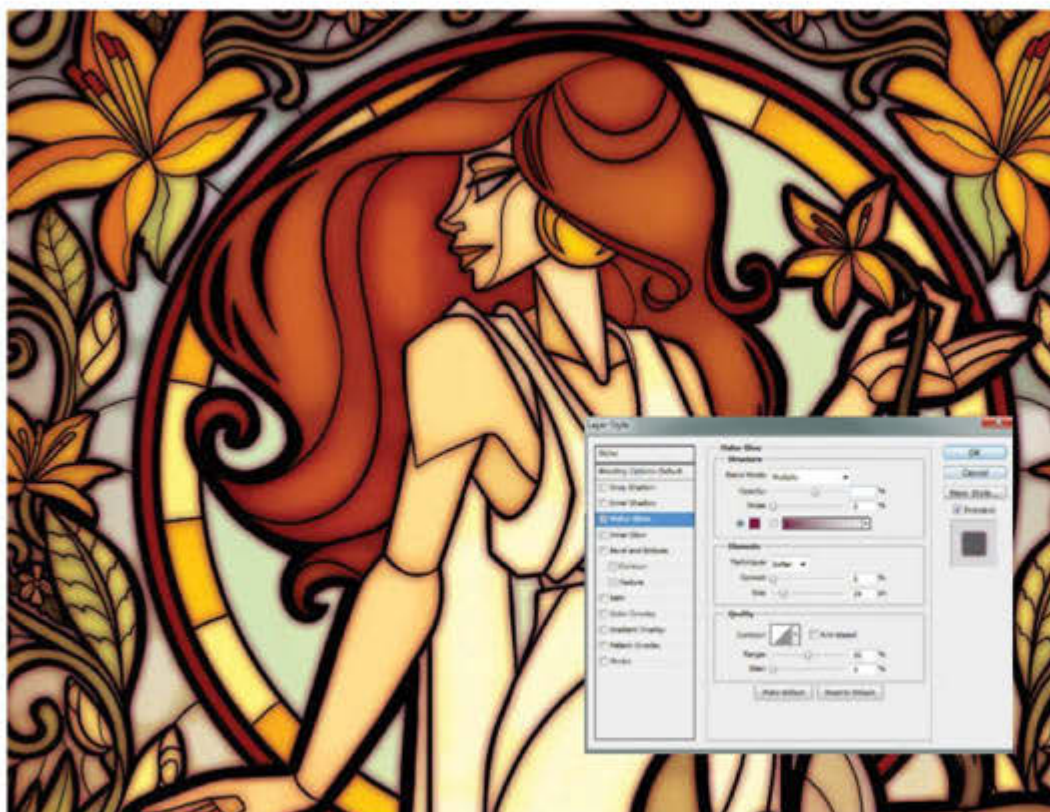
### 14 ADD A GRADIENT

Create a new layer above your line work layer. Using the Gradient tool, select a dark colour that complements the colours in your illustration, but try to avoid black. For this illustration, a dark red is selected. Use the Linear Gradient option and create a gradient from one border in towards the centre of the canvas. The gradient should not extend too far (here it's only about one inch). Repeat on all four sides. In the Layers window, set this layer to Multiply and drop the Opacity to 30%.



### 15 KEEP IT WARM

Above your colour layer, create a new layer, change the blending mode to an Overlay layer and adjust Opacity as needed (for this piece it is set to 20%). Grab a light yellow colour and fill the layer using the Paint Bucket tool. Because this illustration is warm, it is important to keep all the colours (even the cool ones) warm. This overlay keeps things hot and maintains colour harmony. Don't worry if it is looking too warm though; it will be brought down to a cooler temperature later.



### 16 LINE EFFECTS

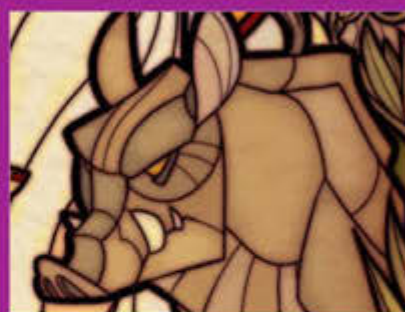
Select your line work layer, navigate to Layer>Layer Style>Outer Glow. In the Layer Style window, change the blend mode to Multiply with the Opacity at 60-75%. Select a dark colour, but again try to avoid black. This layer style will give the illusion that less light is hitting near the line work and will help sell the stained glass effect. Play around with the Spread and Size until you find something that works well and does not make everything feel overly dark.

#### QUICK TIP

To quickly adjust a layer's hue and saturation, use the hotkey Cmd/Ctrl+U. Learning hotkeys can significantly speed up your workflow. There are many hotkeys in Photoshop and lists for both Windows and Mac can easily be found online.

**17 | PLAY WITH CURVES**

After all of the layer effects and shadow treatments, your illustration will likely be looking rather dark. Select your colour layer and the soft light layer. Go to Layer>Merge Layers to combine the two into one merged colour layer (before merging, you can create duplicate layers just in case). Select this new colour layer and go to Image>Adjustments>Curves. Within the Curves window, play with and adjust the colours as needed. The goal is to brighten the image, keeping the feeling of light coming through without blowing the colours out.

**APPROACH TEXTURES WITH CARE**

Textures can really help pull a piece together, but should also be used sparingly. For the stained glass effect, a minor ripple texture helps sell the feel. Other types of textures that work well are water ripples, wall stucco, crinkled paper, and water droplets. There are many places online to get free textures for your work. Be aware, though, that too much photo texturing can take away from the quality of your work. It should enhance the piece, not compete with it.

**18 | THE FINAL TOUCH**

Last but not least, add a texture overlay. Find a large texture online ([CGTextures.com](http://CGTextures.com) is a great place for royalty-free material). Crumpled paper textures work very well for stained glass. Import your desired texture as a new layer above your colours. Go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. Select Colorize and create a light pink colour pattern (or play with the hue until you find a colour that works best). With the texture layer selected, reduce the Opacity to 60% and set the layer blending mode to Overlay.

“You can quickly explore colours by creating swatches and duplicating them out on new layers. Then adjust those layers' opacities and location in order to see a wider range of colours that work”





# DESIGN LOW-POLY PORTRAITS

CREATE A LOW-POLY ILLUSTRATION BY COMBINING PHOTOSHOP AND ILLUSTRATOR FOR PIXEL-PERFECT RESULTS

**L**earn how to create an amazing low-poly illustration from a reference image with this tutorial. Combining Photoshop and Illustrator will allow you to achieve the sharpest, most accurate results. This will work with almost any version of Adobe software, and with other programs too (so if you don't have Illustrator, you can try a free vector program such as Inkscape). The technical side is very basic and the real challenge of this technique is patience.

This effect could be created in Photoshop alone but I find Illustrator easier to handle, as it offers greater precision with vector shapes. Try to understand the whole concept and then choose the tool that is best for you. There are some scripts and plug-ins that create polygons automatically, but they will NEVER be half as good as doing it manually. An algorithm can't see how a tiny white poly in the pupil can make the whole piece look 'alive'; no script is better than the human brain. So trust yourself and let's get this tutorial going!



## OUR EXPERT

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Mordi has been a graphic designer and illustrator for the past six years. He specialises in branding, various illustration techniques, web design and more.

## SOURCE FILES

Download the start photo from <http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-images-portrait-beautiful-young-redhead-woman-image10778824>.

## ■ PREP THE START PHOTO

OPTIMISE YOUR STARTING PHOTO FOR THE LOW-POLY PROCESS

### 01 | SELECT THE RIGHT IMAGE

The reference image should be a high-quality photo. Try to find an image with a strong colour point (like the hair in the photo below). The best kind of image for this technique is a portrait, and one that has a very clear view of the eyes. You will need to zoom in, so pick a high-quality image.



### 02 | ADJUST CONTRAST AND SATURATION

Drop the image into Photoshop. Adjust the Brightness and Contrast levels. You should aim for a high contrast to make the grid-creation step easier. Add more saturation and make the colours bright, but not too much. Do not change Contrast, Brightness or Saturation to higher than 30%; it needs to be sharp and bright, but not overly so!



### 03 | REDUCE QUALITY

If the image is really high in quality, reduce it so that the maximum height/width will be no more than 1000px. Later on when you will need to colour the polygons, it will make it easier to sample the colours while zooming in – you will see the actual pixels and their colour, which will make it easier to choose and more precise.



## ■ WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM PHOTO TO LOW-POLY ILLUSTRATION



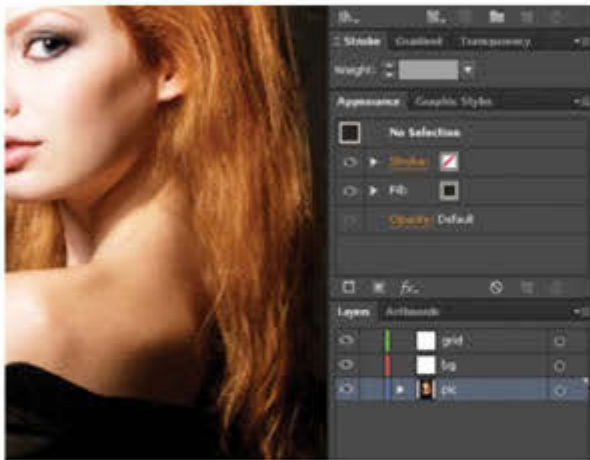
Progress 1: Creating the grid



Progress 2: Creating the polygons



Progress 3: The colouring process

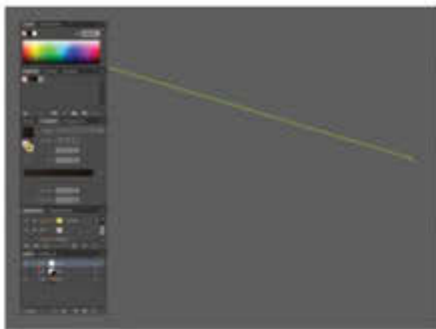


### 04 WORK IN LAYERS

At this stage you can drop the image into Illustrator. Remember to work in layers. Create one layer for the photo, above it create another layer for the background colour and above this, the polygon grid. You can add more layers later on as you wish, but this is mandatory because you will have to turn these layers on and off during the tutorial.

### 06 CHOOSE THE LINE

Next you will start creating the grid. Choose the Line tool from the Toolbar and change the colour to a bright yellow. This is a good colour to contrast against most other colours, so you can see what you are doing. Change the Stroke to 0.5pt width. In Photoshop, you can use the Polygonal Lasso.



### 08 ISOLATE THE PARTS

Work one part at a time. Take the nose, and split it into dark and light parts. Work on one eye and then another. Zoom in if you need to, and try to keep the lines connected to each other as much as possible. There should not be any loose ends – the shapes should all be closed.

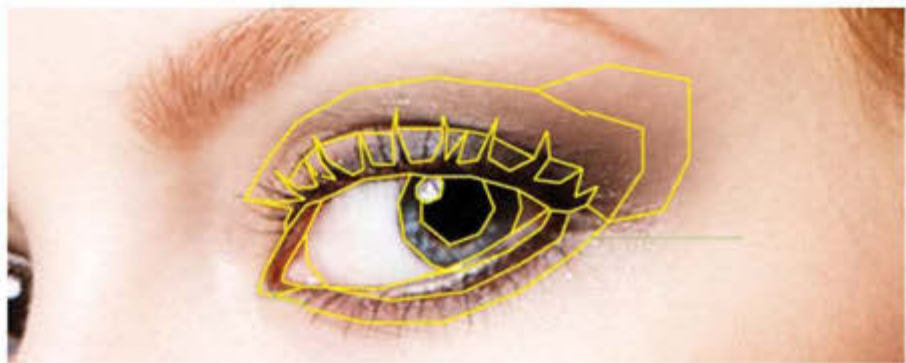
#### QUICK TIP

A good way to move around is using Cmd/Ctrl+Plus and Cmd/Ctrl+Minus to zoom in and out, and pressing the Spacebar to move the artwork. Zoom in for smaller parts and out for bigger ones. Don't work on big parts while zoomed in; you'll need to move around a lot, which will make this longer and harder. Use Cmd/Ctrl+Y to see what you have created – it will keep you motivated!



### 05 CREATE THE COLOURED BACKGROUND

Low-poly illustration is very busy with details, so you should create a clean background with a minimal gradient effect. I have found it best to create the gradient from the image's actual background because it affects the colouration of the skin tone, hair etc. Select two tones from the background and make a gradient. Keep it minimal! If it's hard for you to notice the gradient, then it's good.



### 07 START WITH SMALL AREAS

The best way is to start with the eyes. Zoom in as close as you can to the iris, and re-draw it with the Line tool. This is just like using the Polygonal Lasso tool in Photoshop (so you can use that if you don't have Illustrator). There is no need to be very accurate, just draw the general shape. Keep working on the parts of the eye separately and connect them to one another. In the end this will be one big connected grid.

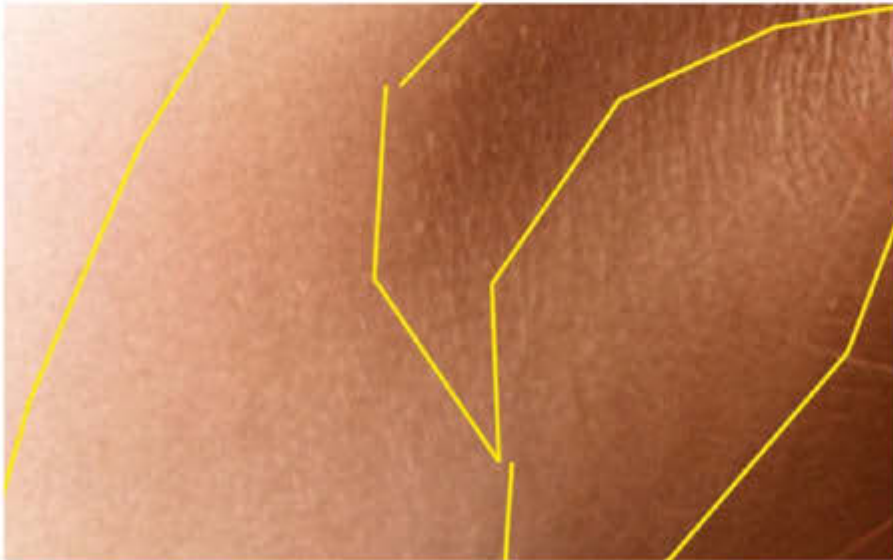


## ■ LINE IT UP

BUILD THE UNDERLYING GRID FOR YOUR LOW-POLY PIECE

### 09 | IGNORE UNCONNECTED LINES (FOR NOW)

During the process you will have a lot of lines that don't connect. Leave them alone! Messing with them will keep you distracted from the main issue – understanding how to take an image and cut it to pieces. Later on you will go back and fix the connections.



“One of the most important parts in the illustration is the light inside the iris; this will give a lot of heart to the image. Keep polying!”

### 11 | MAKING PROGRESS

This is a very long process, so you should take a break once you get the whole image lined up into pieces. The next part is harder and this is normally the part where people give up. Take a break!



### 10 | SPLIT HAIRS

For most portraits, the hair is the challenging part. You should try to split the hair into locks, or big strands of hair. This doesn't have to be perfect, just try to capture the direction of each strand and where it intersects with another.



### 12 | CONNECT THE LINES

Later on you will transform this grid into a Live Paint object, and any loose ends will be a problem. So, you should go over the grid you have created and connect the lines. There is no need to join them together – just put a dot on the other end so there is no gap in between them.



### 13 | START POLYING!!

Now this is the fun part. Again, start with the smaller objects like the eyes. Zoom in and start creating triangles. The triangles should be created from the corners or intersections of two lines. Remember that this is a tiny part of the illustration, so if the polygon gets too small just skip it. It will not show at 100%. One of the most important parts in the illustration is the light inside the iris; this will give a lot of heart to the image. Keep polying!



## MAKING THE POLYGONS

CREATE THE POLYGONS AND GET COLOURING

### 14 BALANCE THE POLYGONS

Start with the small parts, finish them and then move on to the big parts. This way you can connect the parts together and keep a variety of sizes. There should be a contrast in sizes, from extra-small polygons like in the eyes to big polygons in the cheeks, forehead and clothing. This makes the artwork far more interesting and diverse.



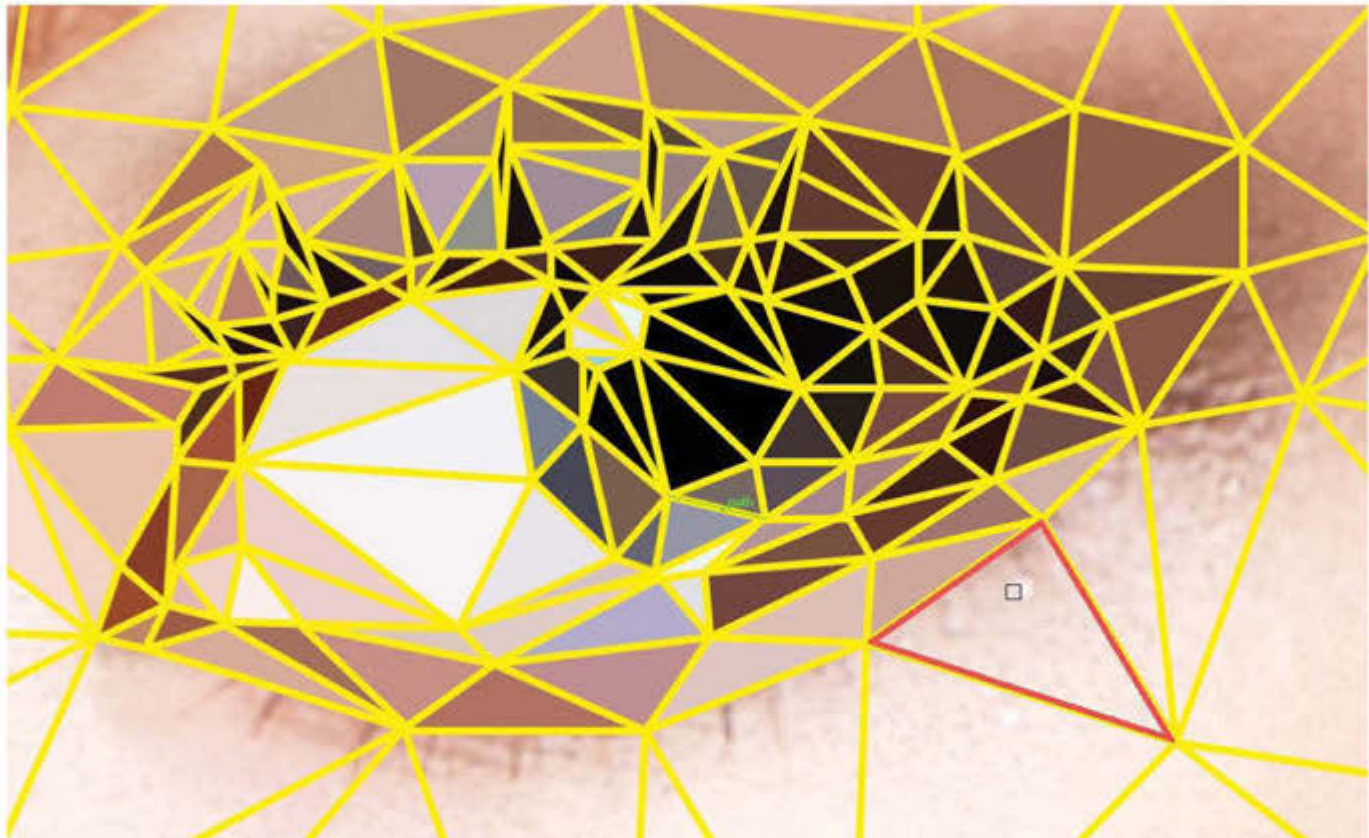
### 15 CONVERT TO LIVE PAINT

Congratulations! You finished the grid! The hard part is behind you. Now select the entire grid (watch that you are not selecting the background too) and go to Object>Live Paint>Make. Now you can colour the grid with the Live Paint Bucket. In Photoshop, you can create a Smart Object.



### 16 START THE COLOURING PROCESS

Zoom into the eye, sample the colour from the photo with the Eyedropper tool (I) and then colour the polygon with the Live Paint Bucket tool (K). In Photoshop, simply use the Paint Bucket. You should be jumping back and forth between the (I) key and the (K) key, sampling and colouring, one polygon at a time. DO NOT click the Bucket when the cursor is on the stroke – it will colour the whole illustration. This happens sometimes, and if it does, just Cmd/Ctrl+Z and move on. Use the Spacebar to move around. Once you let go, it will go back to the previous tool. You can toggle the background layer to see the progress that you've made.



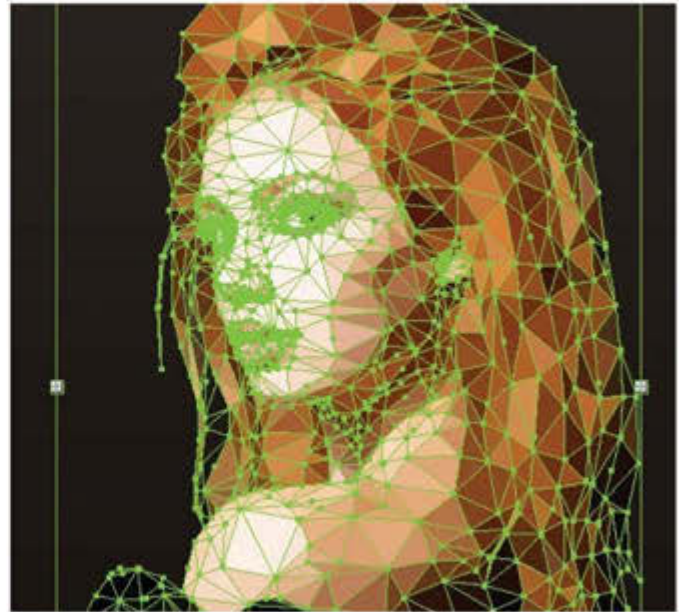


#### ■ STAY FOCUSED

Like I said, the technical side of this illustration is pretty much straightforward, the hard thing is not giving up, not making shortcuts and staying focused. If you need more guidance, have any questions or would like to see some more of my low-poly illustration process, you can contact me via facebook on [www.facebook.com/MordiLevi.gd](https://www.facebook.com/MordiLevi.gd). Thank you for reading!

## 17 REMOVE THE OUTLINE

Once you are finished with the colouring process, select the artwork, go to the stroke colour in the Toolbar, and select 'None' to remove the stroke from the illustration. Go back to the illustration and try to find polygons that you didn't colour. It helps to put a white background behind the illustration; if you have a lot of white polygons in it, use a black background. The contrast will make it easier for you to spot uncoloured polygons.

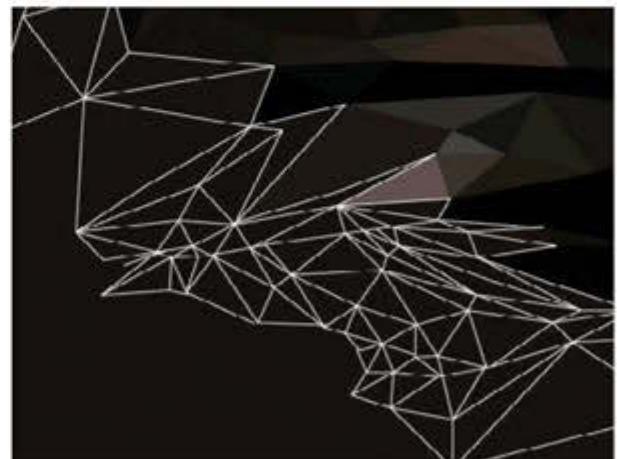


## 18 MAKE IT YOUR OWN!

This is it! You have done it! Now you have an amazing low-poly Illustration. The next step is customising it. Maybe break some polygons off the edges, make parts of the grid visible, alter some colours here and there. Drop the final artwork into Photoshop and play around with it. Make it your own!

#### ■ QUICK TIP

To re-create the breaking polygons effect, select the artwork and go to Object>Expand. Ctrl/right-click the artwork and choose Ungroup. Repeat the Ungroup command until the polygons are separate, then you can play around with them. Remember to make a copy in case things go wrong.



# PHOTO EDITING

Improve ordinary photos with a variety of Photoshop techniques, from retouching to colour adjustments and compositing

## **120** 30 retouching tips for pros

Expert and practical advice for the artistic endeavour that is retouching

## **132** Master architectural retouching

Planning, creativity and colour balance can give a flat image visual depth and an evocative look

## **138** Combine photos and graphics

Learn how to create an exciting, painterly portrait illustration from photographs and textures

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“The best retouchers have a solid understanding of light, anatomy and composition”

# 30 RETOUCHING TIPS FOR PROS

IT ISN'T JUST REMOVING SPOTS AND MAKING PEOPLE THINNER. RETOUCHING HAS BECOME A PROFESSION WITH SPECIALITIES AND AN ARTISTIC ENDEAVOUR IN ITS OWN RIGHT

## 01. KNOW YOUR TOOLS

"Commercial beauty and fashion retouchers have quite a streamlined set of tools," says retoucher Daniel Meadows ([www.dmd-digital-retouching.com](http://www.dmd-digital-retouching.com)). "The foundations are Clone/Heal, Dodge and Burn with filters, paint brushes and masks, but the majority of the time you'll find yourself hitting J, S and O (Healing Brush, Clone Stamp and Dodge/Burn respectively), although most retouchers, including myself, have their own dodge and burn system.

"A great way to give yourself a little extra control is to create two Curves adjustment layers, one with the midpoint lowered to burn, and the other raised to dodge. Black mask these out and paint on the mask with white to bring in the effect as locally as you'd like. This gives you the opportunity to tweak the curve at any point in your workflow and to work completely non-destructively... quick fixes won't work until you've got the basics covered.

"There are a number of plug-ins or techniques around that blast somewhere around the middle radius of a shot and make them appear smooth while retaining texture. This sounds great in theory and they're extremely tempting to overuse because the results are dramatic, but it's an obvious and unrealistic approach avoided by the majority of the clients you'll be hoping to work with.

"Once you've got the foundations of dodge and burn (I cover this on my blog), you can start to implement a few of these quick fixes, such as Frequency Separation and inverted High Pass to complement your workflow. It's all about learning how to work correctly before fighting dirty! It's also hugely important to regularly look through fashion magazines; they're full of the kind of ads you'll be hoping to work with, and trends in post-processing do change."



© Adam Browning Hill



© Franklin Thompson

## 02. BE COMMUNICATIVE AND CREATIVE

"So much of being a good retoucher is having exceptional communication skills, and being honest and reliable," says Ashlee Gray ([www.ashleegrayretouch.com](http://www.ashleegrayretouch.com)). "It may sound silly, but over the years I've learned that clear communication is key. Retouchers are hired to interpret and execute other people's visions on a daily basis; however, I believe it's just as important for retouchers to have a vision of their own and bring more than what's expected to the table.

"First, I like to find out as much as I can about the client and their brand by researching previous work to get a feel for what they like. Often times they pass along inspiration or detailed retouching notes that help me to understand how far to go with the images. Some clients come to me with very specific retouching notes to make sure things don't get overlooked for any reason. Retouching notes are a great starting point, especially when there are tight deadlines. On the other hand, there are some people who hire me based on my work and trust that I can bring my vision to the table. If this is the case, we have some sort of creative conversation where I ask a lot of questions and send samples to make sure I'm on the right track and not wasting time."

**Laughter lines:** "Leave some wrinkles on the image rather than softening them down too much."

**Nice gnashers:** "Sometimes I leave flaws on images on purpose to help create a sense of reality. Flaws on this image that I left were the not-so-perfect teeth (but almost perfect)."

**Take your time:** "Never give up! Beauty retouching is so time-consuming that it will always take longer than fashion or editorial. It's easy to judge if an image has been rushed."

**In the pink:** "Already having used nice vibrant colours on the nails and eyes, I then decided in post to add a nice pink poppy tone to the background rather than keeping it white as originally shot."

**Retro retouching:** "I had the opportunity of shooting this great image. MUA was going for an Audrey Hepburn-style pose."

**Tools of the trade:** "It's a good idea to invest in a decent tablet. I use the Wacom Intuos5 Large on my Mac Pro, and an Intuos5 Small on my MacBook Pro. I also have a preference of using the spring-loaded nib on my Intuos pens."

### 03. FROM FLAW TO FINISH

CHARN S. BEDI TALKS THROUGH SHOOTING AND RETOUCHING THIS MUA IMAGE

## 04. A MODEL JOB

ASHLEE GRAY EXPLAINS HER WORKFLOW ON THIS IMAGE SHOT BY FRANKLIN THOMPSON

### 01 | A MODEL JOB

Once I open an image, I start by creating a blank layer and begin drawing notes all over the image with a bright-coloured brush. This helps me visualise what I want to accomplish before I start working on the specific areas.



## 02 | LUSTROUS LOCKS

From there, I'd like to say I always start at the same place, but usually it's with the things I find the most distracting. It's often hard to look past big blemishes, hairs going through the eyes, or even areas that need colour correction. In this case, the skin has been cleaned, all flyaways and cross hairs have been removed, and additional hair has been added to the right side.



## 03 | BURNING BONE STRUCTURE

This is now complete with dodging and burning to bring out bone structure and shine to the hair, with colour and toning added. Finally, a High Pass with a layer mask was used to sharpen the hair in some areas, and a small amount of grain added.



## 05. ACHIEVING SYMMETRY

### Every blocked pore

For Daniel Meadows, much of the retoucher's job is bridging the gap between what the naked eye sees, and what the increasingly sophisticated camera does. "With modern lenses we can achieve very sharp images," he says, "and unfortunately with that comes a detailed record of every hair and blocked pore, every irregular eyelash. The eye doesn't tend to pick up on these tiny details in real life, but with close, sharp beauty shots we tend to even these out before print for the benefit of the shot."

### Glowing skin

"With beauty work, skin is probably the most time-consuming part of the process, as texture must be retained. In advertising and editorial at the high end, each part of the skin is carefully dodged and burned to even out texture and maintain realism. I usually start with compositional adjustments. Sometimes a hand, for example, will be better positioned in an outtake from the set, so occasionally there's some compositing required."

### Dipping a fashion toe

"Quite often I'll receive a sidecar XMP file with RAWs if the photographer knows the look they're going for, but some of the most fun projects are those where I'm encouraged to experiment with colour treatments. I've frequently got my head in a fashion magazine, so there are always a few styles I'm looking to try something new with for the right shot."

### Even eyes

"Another one of those things the naked eye doesn't tend to pick up on but the lens notices is the symmetry of the eyes. My own left eye is slightly higher than my right. No-one would ever pick up on it but you can tell if I point it out on my driver's license! At the other end of my workflow, I usually leave sharpening and colour treatments until the last steps. It's important not to oversharpen your working file at the start or you're giving yourself a lot more work."



## 06. LIPSTICK AND SPIT

"Some of the most common fixes are eyelashes not being stuck on properly, hair coming across the eyes, and uneven lipstick," says beauty retoucher Charn S. Bedi ([www.thebeautyretoucher.com](http://www.thebeautyretoucher.com)). "When retouching macro lip shots, spit on the gums can be annoying as the light reflects off it, causing a shine. I have a library of eyelashes taken and neatened up from previous work to aid me if I ever have to re-create them. The trickiest thing to retouch in beauty is hair as it is so fine. I zoom in very close for hair retouching to remove strands of hair that go against the natural flow of the hair style. This helps to refine the hair to make it look neater. This then enables me to fill in dark areas to make it look more full bodied and healthy. I use various amounts of layers and clone brushes with different blend modes to get to the final result, finishing off with a dodge and burn to create contouring and a nice shine."





## 07. FACE TO THE FORE

ASHLEE GRAY TALKS THROUGH HER RETOUCHING ON THIS IMAGE

**Facial freestyle:** When I don't know how to tackle tricky things I like to do what I call 'freestyling'. It's basically creating a new layer and telling myself I'm going to problem solve using any way I can think of, and if it doesn't work out I'll just delete the layer, grab another coffee and start all over.

**Bringing the burn:** The main focus was bringing out her eyes and the gold of the eye shadow. I built in dimension using dodging and burning and also put a tone on the background that made it a little cooler.

**A sharp hairline:** Her hair had some subtle motion and a beautiful shape so it was pretty minimal work, only removing cross hairs and a few distracting flyaways, as well as cleaning up the hairline.

**Making the cut:** The image was part of an editorial we did for *Factice* magazine. It wasn't part of the original selection; it wasn't until we were almost finished with the retouching of the others that we added this one in, to make the story a little more well rounded.

**Horizontal power:** We picked this one to help break up all the other vertical shots. This beauty shot allowed us to get much tighter and really focus on her beauty.

**Clothing concerns:** The top she had was pretty structured and fit her really well, so it only required a bit of shaping around her shoulder area.

© Photographer: Lara Jade

## 08. ARTISTIC, NOT ANOREXIC

"The best retouchers have a solid understanding of light, anatomy and composition," explains Daniel Meadows. "It's helpful to study the planes of the face, of the way light and shadow behave from a traditional art standpoint. Good make-up tutorials that deal with contouring are also a great source of knowledge and inspiration. There are centuries of sound advice from before we had Photoshop or even photography – be sure to learn from them! One of the most important things to learn as a beginner is what a flaw is or isn't. I engage online with a lot of beginner retouchers and try to offer advice where I can, and I know how easy it is to be over-enthusiastic. Lines under the eyes, moles, freckles, beauty spots, perfectly natural neck creases, I've seen them all wiped out. Usually the question 'why?' is enough to prompt a eureka moment of 'you know, I'm really not sure!' Beauty retouching isn't about creating a wax model. You learn as you go that less is often more, that if it isn't improving the shot it really isn't worth doing simply because you have the tools to do so. Remember that the brand or photographer chose the model for a reason. Slightly contour an unfortunately squished bit by all means, improve a line a little for composition, but the small percentage of retouchers whose first instinct is to make someone thinner need to re-evaluate their methods."

## 09. A FACE TOO FAR

"For me, an image has gone too far when you've lost natural texture, dimension and shape," says Ashlee Gray. "Texture can be lost by a number of ways, blurring and cloning are probably the top two. Dimension is often lost by removing natural smile lines completely, making the whites of the eyes too white, and by removing shadows under the eyes or lips. Having a basic understanding of anatomy is really important so that tools like Liquify aren't abused when trying to shape parts of the body. In the end if retouching goes too far it looks cheap and tacky. I suggest keeping it simple by polishing the skin while keeping some natural elements such as moles or freckles. On the other hand, those who are learning how to retouch often forget about the body parts matching the face. The face will look clean and polished but the arms, hands, and legs will all be a different skin tone. Don't forget about the rest of the body!"

## 10. ABOVE AND BEYOND

"A good retoucher is someone who will obviously go above and beyond their client's expectations, without being asked," argues Bedi. "After all, the final result of the image will also reflect on their reputation. I generally start by looking at an image to see what I think has to be done to it, then send my client back a marked up version with notes. Normally they will add to the mark up. If I think too much has been added, I usually flag it up straight away as I wouldn't want to give them back something that may look like a waxwork, or just overly retouched. I am strongly against the term 'it can be fixed in post'. This screams at me if I am sent an image where the hair and make-up has not been done properly, which is where the line is crossed for too much retouching to be done. I have had to deal with a few of these in recent times where I have had to just turn the job down."

© Photographer: Charn S. Bedi, make up: Aimee Bassi

© Photographer: Sarah Silver

## 11. TUNE YOUR INSTRUMENT

"Create a rectangle and add a gradient from one end to the other," instructs Mark Gilvey ([www.mgcre8v.com](http://www.mgcre8v.com)). "Now put a mark through it and try to restore the gradient to its original state. Why? You will see this linear gradient in many different things; architecture, walls ceilings, a sheet of paper on a table, a sign and so on. If you can restore the gradient, chances are you can reconstruct or restore it in a real retouch. Before I start with a composite, a retouch, restoration, or any type of major work that I will do in Photoshop, I will look the parts over as if I'm about to write a piece of music and assess what needs to be done and weigh that against my confidence to be able to do it. Then I begin the composition. I know it sounds goofy but some work is like that. You have to get your skills and your confidence to a level where you can be the conductor, and that takes years of practice."



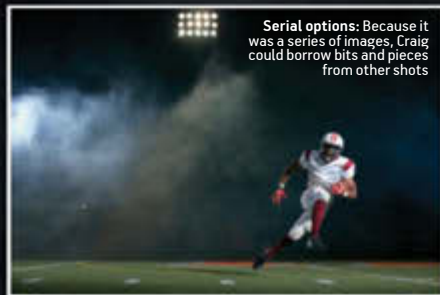
© Mark Gilvey



© Photographer: Jeff Ludes

## 12. CLEAN UP BEFORE CREATIVITY

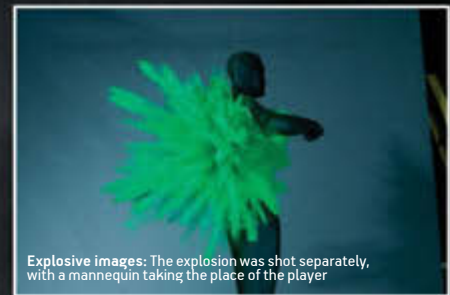
"My first stop on any image is clean-up: removing any dust, lens spots, sensor marks and so on," explains Barry Craig ([www.barrycraig.co.uk](http://www.barrycraig.co.uk) and [www.digital-giant.com](http://www.digital-giant.com)). "This is the work that needs to be done regardless of client comments. The process after this varies depending on the image. If there are elements to be composited into the main scene, I will repeat the clean-up on these then extract them with the Pen tool. Then I will build a low-res composition to show the client before the high-res retouching begins. Clients usually have an end product in mind; more often than not they have concept art that the art director has drawn or commissioned. The role of the retoucher is to take this concept to the very strongest final image it can be. There's still a lot of magic involved and the client still expects a lot of creative initiative to be taken."



**Serial options:** Because it was a series of images, Craig could borrow bits and pieces from other shots



**Bring on the brushes:** Craig made brushes shaped like clouds and explosions from the material shot to complete the image



**Explosive images:** The explosion was shot separately, with a mannequin taking the place of the player

## 13. PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

"This shot was a nightmare to get right," says Barry Craig of the Adidas MiCoach series he worked on. "The poor guy had to do the same aggressive sprint all day until the client was happy that they'd captured the energy well enough. The explosions in the image were shot separately in the studio, so we used a mannequin to get a sense of how they would interact with a body. The shape and direction of the explosions are supposed to be representative of the particular movement that the player is performing, so the clouds were shaped using numerous different shots. I actually ended up making a number of brushes shaped like clouds and explosions from the material we shot to help shape the explosion how the client wanted it. Having brushes shaped like this was the only way to flexibly sculpt the explosion with speed and accuracy while the client was still making comments. Once we had the general shape and size confirmed, we could go in and improve it, add fine detail, shadowing, interaction with the player and so on. I also had to change the entire background. The client liked the player's shape and expression in this shot, but not the amount of smoke or the lighting in the background, so I ended up building a composite of a few of the other shots from the day's shooting."

© Photographer: Sophie Ebrard



**Client comments:** Taking the feedback of the client on board is always a big part of the job



#### 14. ADDING ATMOSPHERE

BARRY CRAIG EXPLAINS THE WORK HE DID ON THIS IMAGE FROM PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID WESTPHAL

##### 01 | LET THERE BE (MORE) LIGHT

This is the image after basic clean-up. There is some nice light in the sky and some point-of-interest light in the tent, but these both need to be enhanced. We also need to think about the client and what the product is trying to communicate. Let's start with the sky.



##### 02 | STARRY SKIES

While on location, the photographer was able to capture some longer exposure shots of the night sky. To add a little more life into this shot, I'm just going to use one of these shots to add some stars to the sky and lift the colour to a more attractive blue. Already the image is looking more alive. The product being advertised in this instance is a bluetooth speaker that also features party light. Keeping this in mind, the next step is to add some directional, coloured lighting to the tent.



© Photographer: David Westphal

##### 03 | PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Adding some lighting, glows, and rays to the tent really helps to lift the whole image. There's lots to consider when adding lighting effects, highlights on the sand and glows on the dunes behind, for example. We've also had to create a shadow for the boy in the tent. When the image was shot there was still no physical product in existence, so as part of the final stage we will also add in the speaker, which was shot at a later date in the studio.



© Photographer: Brian Konoske

#### 15. MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

"The most important skill for a good retoucher is an eye for realism," adds Craig. "Even when you're working on a fantastical image you have to base it in reality. Lighting and physics will give the game away if they aren't correct. You also have to be patient; there's lots of ground work to be done on any composition, all of it important to the final result. The most common issues are adding or removing features that couldn't be physically altered on location; removing streetlights, buildings, logos, cars, people and so on. Where possible, the photographer will shoot plates to the left or right of the obstruction to aid in removing them, but this is only really common in a photographer who is used to working with a retoucher. The trickiest things can be complicated image extensions for new layouts. These are usually required last minute, meaning the photographer likely didn't shoot any material to aid with the job."

## 16. PRODUCT PROBLEMS

"Colour casts and removing unwanted items, logos, and extending backgrounds and floors are the most common changes," says Andy McLaughlin (<http://tcistudio.co.uk>). "Often the trickiest are seemingly the simplest. Extending areas like floors can be tricky and can require re-creating your own textures and custom brushes to match the original textures. Clone Stamping and Content-Aware Fill may give you a starting point, but are often affected by light gradients and vignetting caused by light fall-off. Clone Stamping these types of surfaces can just create a blotchy mess. In my own work, the most common retouching is bleaching backgrounds and making dark areas clean. I use a lot of channel masking to create accurate selections for layer masks and adjustment layers. I retouch a lot of my own photography and I think that understanding the image as a photographer makes me a better retoucher and visa versa."



© Andy McLaughlin

## 17. FIND YOUR OWN STYLE

To improve your own retouching work, McLaughlin advises that you look at other great photography for inspiration. "Truly awesome images have been expertly retouched as well as superbly shot, as what's left out can be as critical as what's left in. Quite often I'll study an image to get an understanding of the lighting setups used as much as the retouching techniques. If the retouching has been done well, you'll probably have a hard time telling what the retoucher has done!

"My own rule of thumb is not to let the viewer see my lights or modifiers reflected anywhere in the subject, and definitely no dust left on there. When you look at even a well-cleaned product straight from

camera, there's loads of fine dust on there; get rid of it. Create your own set of golden rules regarding what you always fix or change, or faults to fix every time. Before you know it, you'll have your own style. In my own work I love to explore mixing graphic art, photography and retouching, I love enhancing my own product photography with light painting as well as freezing liquids with flash and incorporating the results. They are often unexpected and unusual, especially with liquid.

"I believe that the combination of creative retouching and the different photography techniques brings an element of surprise and an unusual twist to displaying products, and some interesting graphic arts images."



© Andy McLaughlin

## 18. KEEP THE CLIENT IN MIND

"Many finished images are what we lovingly refer to as 'Frankensteined'," jokes Nancy Lund Springer (<http://nlsretoucher.com>). "It is very common in product retouching to not receive 'golden' samples, as the product has not been fully developed; but the packaging, including the images for that packaging, needs to be developed. You may sometimes get a crude image of the product in whatever iteration of production it happens to be in accompanied by a printed schematic that represents the final size,

proportion, materials, colours and graphics for that particular product. A retoucher's job is to make that image believably match the schematic. There are some tricks to this type of retouching that incorporate a lot of drawing techniques, a good imagination and a determination to make a less-than-perfect image look amazing.

"Patience and discipline are important traits for retouchers, along with speed, and a good eye for detail. Good retouchers have a passion for their work. They also must have a good understanding

of colour correction, lighting, shadows and compositing. You have to be willing to ask questions, step out of your comfort zone and experiment. You must be willing to accept advice and criticism. You need to have a solid understanding of your tools and keyboard shortcuts to access them. The ability to seamlessly move from one project to another when priorities change is very important. And it is critical that you understand your client's vision to envision the final results. The most successful retouchers understand the value of customer service."



## 19. USE SMART OBJECTS

© Photographer: Taylor Castle

Pro retoucher Brian York ([www.brnyrk.com](http://www.brnyrk.com)) outlines his workflow: "First, process the RAW files, which I prefer to do myself to ensure highlight and shadow detail is preserved, just slightly under what the final contrast of the image may be. Since the majority of what I do is compositing, I start with cutting out the elements and creating Smart Objects, always with a layer mask inside. Then I add everything to the composition to make sure the processing of the elements are all at a good starting point. Using Smart Objects for the elements means I can always go back and replace the base image if needed, regardless of any transformations applied. Basic clean-up would later be done inside the Smart Object. Smart Objects are important when compositing as they allow me to retain the transformation points after they are applied, so I can go back and make subtle tweaks if needed. I recently had to create a tapered mug from a straight sided mug and apply an embossed logo. The alterations to the ice and condensation of the mug were dealt with and then put into a Smart Object to create transformations. This allowed me to be able to tweak the shape to the client's specifications at any point while retaining the original image inside the Smart Object to make changes easier."



## 20. ASSESS THE IMAGE

"The golden rule of retouching is that the final product must look natural," says Nancy Lund Springer. "The image should be perfect to your client's specifications, without leaving a trace that a retoucher has been there. Assessing the image, especially images that are problematic, is the first step. This generally takes a few minutes. There are many problems that may need to be overcome, from moiré and false colour artefacts, strange waves or rings of colour and tone rippling over fabric, to imperfections in skin, facial hair on women, wrinkles needing removal in fabric, seams that don't match... the list is endless. While the toolset needed to address these problems remains the same, the image always dictates which combination of myriad techniques will be used. I usually start with what I determine to be the most difficult area in order to overcome difficult obstacles at the beginning of the project rather than at the end. Sometimes you just need take some deep breaths and start. When faced with a daunting retouching task, I look to one of the most relevant expressions for inspiration: it's like eating an elephant; just take one bite at a time."



© Photography: Innerspin

## 21. BEWARE HIDDEN JOBS

"There can also be an array of problems overlooked by your client that need to be addressed, but due to the extra time it might take, may not have been budgeted into the project," adds Lund Springer. "An example of a retouching job I once had is typical of this scenario. We were asked to retouch a very dark image of two models in Egyptian costumes flanked by a beautiful gold-encrusted sarcophagus and large vases. Upon review of the image with a creative director, there didn't seem to be a lot of work involved in post-retouching and [it] was budgeted accordingly. However, when I opened the RAW image, it was revealed that the vases and sarcophagus were placed on wooden crates to make them at a higher level to fit into the shot properly. Also, the fabric used for a backdrop was too long and fell in waves on the ground, and some objects unrelated to the shot were in full view. My task was to cover these distractions by compositing parts of other existing elements into the shot."



© Photography: Innerspin

## 22. QUESTIONS OF COMPOSITION

### 001 | Never work with children or animals

"One of the big tricks here was capturing the feel of the little feathers on the edges," explains Gretchen Hilmers ([www.g-tou.com](http://www.g-tou.com)). "One of the most important aspects of the composites is to clean up the seams. When you're compositing, the joining edges need a little TLC and that usually starts with blending, adding textures and ensuring the depth of field is correct. Sometimes there are faint lines that occur around the edges of figures, and while I use several methods of fixing, I like to use a layer on Darken or Lighten and clone the background elements up to the edge. But I think the real secret to any composite is how you shape with light and shadow because that will really bring the elements together."

001



© Photographer: Michael Clinard

### 002 | Three become one

"This is one of my all time favorite projects because we got to pickle Carrie Brownstein and Fred Armisen," continues Hilmers. "It was a dream come true. This one needed a lot of TLC because it was basically three original shots – each actor behind Plexi and an image of a pickle jar with green liquid. They really needed work when it came to depth of field, colour shift, shading and then warping to emulate the feel of being submerged in liquid. Smart Objects had a heavy part to play in this shot. A fun little side note – those are my homemade pickles in the jar with them."

002



© Photographer: Maarten de Boer

### 004 | Balancing the real

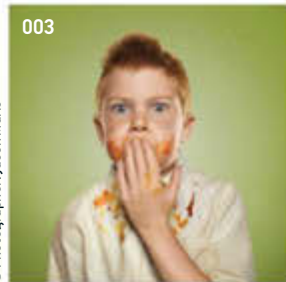
"Working with Gregg Segal is always a blast because his images usually have a large amount of humour in them. He's also one of those shooters that are really good at getting things in one take, but when it comes to animals it usually doesn't matter how good you are because they don't seem to like taking direction. This was a little tricky in that there's the combined lighting of the figures and the environment, so trying to find a balance between natural and artificial was a bit of a trick."



004

© Photographer: Gregg Segal

003



© Photographer: Jason Maris

### 003 | Portrait polishing

"It's extremely common for a portrait to need a new background colour, or in the case of advertising, for the subject to be able to be placed on any number of backgrounds. That's where silo'ing comes into play, and you need to be able to either mask hair out perfectly, or be able to hand draw it in convincingly. The four subjects for this campaign all needed backgrounds that had more impact, and so they all had to be removed."

## 23. PERFECT, BUT NOT TOO PERFECT

GRETCHEN HILMERS WORKED ON THIS IMAGE, FEATURING THE DANCERS OF THE MIAMI CITY BALLET, AND DESCRIBES HER GENERAL APPROACH TO COMPOSITING WORK

**Getting down to business:** "I start on any gross stuff first...nose hair, food in teeth, boogers, acne... I just want to get that out of the way so I can move onto the fun, creative stuff."

**Zoom in:** "Don't work at anything less than 200%. I can't tell you how many times I've received redos and when I zoom in past 100% it's a disaster. Sure... maybe you can get away with something when it's only printed at 9 x 12, but that doesn't mean you should deliver it that way."

**Fabric fusses:** "Every fabric is different but the general method is to match up the colour and then either create a pattern stamp or use small patches of a high pass layer to re-create the texture. It can take a lot of time, and I know the general rule is to just try to re-create it and throw a bunch of noise on top, but when you work on an image at 200% or more you notice that inconsistency. It's really important to me that things line up, even such a small detail. Sure, 99% of people won't notice, but I'll know."

**Hair hassles:** "Usually hair needs some work. While I personally like natural, more crazy stray hairs a lot of other people don't. There's a delicate balance between sculpting hair shape to avoid the dreaded helmet head, removing flyaways and then drawing them back in where they look natural."

**Don't go too far:** "There are times when so much has been changed that reality just feels off. There's the phenomena of the uncanny valley, which is when you just know something is off. It generally applies to people, but I strongly feel we can sense it with everything. There's just a moment when something changes and an image can go downhill, and when it does, it usually goes downhill quickly."

**Work together:** "Of course, there's only so much a retoucher can do, and starting off with a beautiful photo and a great relationship with a client can really help. Every client has a particular style, and it's up to the retoucher to be able to assist with making that extra step while maintaining the integrity of the original work. That's why I always look at what I do as teamwork."

© Photographer: Alberto Oviedo



## 24. MASK OUT

"Using a Wacom tablet and pen, I set a brush at 90% Hardness and a smaller size and go all the way around the object at 200% zoom, painting black on the layer mask with an opposite-coloured background behind it," explains Brian York. "If, for example, I am masking out a bottle on a white background, I put a black background solid colour layer behind it, and then I know it will look great on anything. Some people get caught up in a lot of Photoshop trickery to get a mask, but for me a mask is about how the edges look visually when cut out. This direct visual process allows me to inspect every edge, and once I go around an object like this I know it is perfect. I'm a bit obsessive about masks, and want to know that it is right. However, in saying all of that I don't discount sophisticated techniques in getting masks; I just prefer this method most of the time."

© Photographer: Clint Blowers



## 25. RESTORATION

"The biggest challenge in photo restoration is having to reconstruct missing or destroyed parts of an image," says Mark Gilvey. "When there is little or no source material to work from, this can be difficult to work with. I had a photo of a brother and sister like this. Some people looked at the damage in the lower right corner and thought it was an ice sculpture, but it wasn't. The photo was just missing emulsion. I had to reconstruct the entire area of his plaid coat. Basically, I guessed at what it would look like on his side vs a sleeve. I sampled certain areas onto new layers and pushed and pulled them until they looked close. I think I put 20 hours into this one image, going way beyond the client's budget, but I stuck to their budget because I wanted to see if I could do it. I wasn't going to let it beat me!"



## 26. KEEP LEARNING

"Be patient," advises Rob DiCaterino, a high-end digital imaging specialist. "Photo restoration can be slow, painstaking, time consuming, and yes, even boring, but good results are extremely satisfying and worth the effort to both my clients and me. It's win-win. Zoom in close and pay attention to detail. Global filters are usually too heavy-handed and destructive; use layer masks to apply them locally instead, as needed. Understand histograms and the info panel, and use spatial frequencies to your advantage."

"Successful retouchers are also proficient with a pen tablet, use profiled and calibrated displays, understand colour theory and management, and create Actions to increase efficiency. They are interpreters, translating clients' notes into the end product. They are good at sales, marketing, and customer service in order to attract and retain happy, paying clients. They are responsible enough to work out realistic deadlines with clients up front... and stick to those deadlines. They trust the info panel... and their eyes. They handle rejection well. And they always continue to learn."

"My motto is, 'There are ten different ways to accomplish the same thing in Photoshop.' I learn

as many ways as I can so I have more options to approach any given situation. Some retouchers might struggle through a situation using only one or two techniques, but I'll know some additional ones that allow me to complete that step more quickly. That's one of the things I love about what I do – retouching fulfils the part of my brain that craves problem solving and logic, and allows me to achieve many personal victories on a daily basis."



© Sharon M. Atkinson, CARE for Sandy, Sayreville, NJ

## 27. IF YOU WANT TO GET INTO COMPOSITING...

"Study how light works, how a camera sees objects and space," says Brian York. "Become good at painting in Photoshop. Make composites for practise, and always refine the way you do things and lay out a file. Buy a monitor made for colour-critical work and learn to use a Wacom tablet."

"Most of what I do involves basic tasks; just done with a lot of finesse. Things I use a lot are brushes, Curves and Smart Objects. I have found it valuable to become good at creating detail from nothing, and brushes are instrumental in that. I have a huge trove of brushes that I have created for various things over the years. Many people use Levels, but Curves gives you a lot of finesse over contrast and saturation that is just not possible with levels; especially when dealing with skin tones."

© Photographer: Taylor Castle



## 28. BRING THE PAST TO LIFE

ROB DICATERINO (WWW.ROBDICATERINO.COM) EXPLAINS THE WORK HE DOES FOR CARE FOR SANDY

### 01 THE PROJECT

Since June 2013, DiCaterino has volunteered for CARE for Sandy, which offers free digital restoration services for individuals and families with photos damaged by Hurricane Sandy. CARE stands for Cherished Albums Restoration Effort and is made possible by the efforts of generous retouchers worldwide. This is one image he received from a family in Long Beach, NY, who wish to remain anonymous. You can volunteer yourself at [www.careforsandy.org](http://www.careforsandy.org).

### 02 THE METHOD

The damage was severe, and in this case DiCaterino's main technique was Split Frequency, but sometimes he has to be more creative: "Good, successful retouchers are artists, craftspeople, and technicians. They are analytical. They mentally deconstruct each image, envision the end result, and quickly formulate the steps to achieve it. They show restraint, know when to apply a specific filter, and invent unconventional uses for them to speed up the workflow."

### 03 THE RESULT

After colour correction, this is the final image that the family got back. As DiCaterino notes, Photoshop is "an incredibly powerful tool that helps produce amazing results in the right hands – in my case, restoring priceless memories and preserving history. Photo restoration is its own form of time travel and I find it fascinating and gratifying."

## 29. HOW TO HEAL

"The main problems are usually rips, creases, stains, and fading," says DiCaterino. "The trickiest is repairing damage to a photo printed on paper that features a textured pattern, which was popular several decades ago. Many retouchers blur the texture out or apply FFT, but to me, restoring a photo means returning it to its original state, texture and all. To retain that detail, I use the Healing Brush, Frequency Separations, Channels, and so on. It can be a painstaking process depending on the severity and location of the damage, but the results are true to the original and more representative of the photo's era. For lightly damaged or faded photos, it's easy to know when I'm finished. For badly damaged photos or ones with major colour shifts, it can be more difficult. In those cases, when I think I'm done I'll revisit the photo the next day with fresh eyes and make any necessary adjustments. Sometimes, I even ask a colleague to quickly evaluate my work and see if anything looks off."

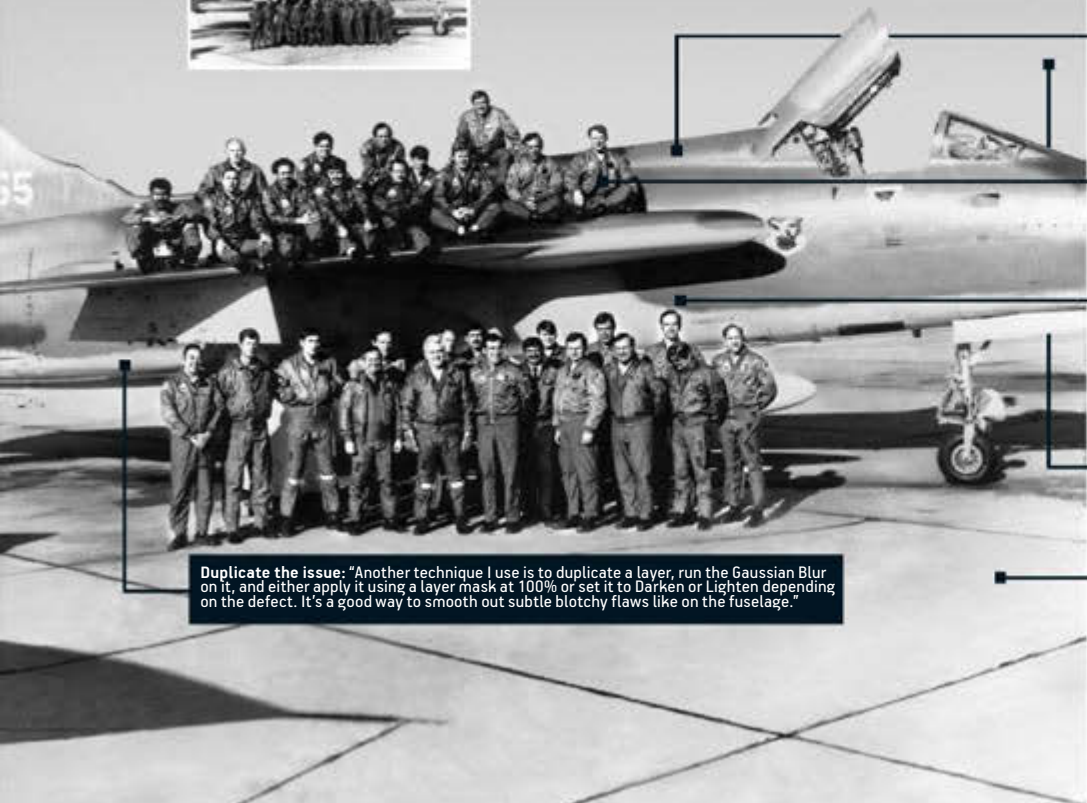
"Retouching and restoration is best when it looks natural, as if nothing had been done to the image. It becomes too much when it looks obviously phony, plastic, processed, or otherwise manipulated. I've seen a lot of restorations that look soft, airbrushed, cut out, and/or borderline-cartoonish. If the background is in bad shape, fix it, don't just cover it up with a gradient. If the original photo contains film grain, keep it, don't surface blur it to death. Like recorded music, when too much noise reduction is applied, the fine details are lost. By retaining fine detail, I succeed in preserving history. Yes, doing it that way is more challenging, but the results are better."



© CARE for Sandy Polaroid. The family (from West Nyack, NY) wish to remain anonymous

## 30. GROUP SHOTS

GROUP PHOTOS CAN BE THE TRICKIEST, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT, TO RESTORE, AS MARK GILVEY EXPLAINS



**Duplicate the issue:** "Another technique I use is to duplicate a layer, run the Gaussian Blur on it, and either apply it using a layer mask at 100% or set it to Darken or Lighten depending on the defect. It's a good way to smooth out subtle blotchy flaws like on the fuselage."

**Plane sailing:** "The jet had some flaws covering it including dust and other types of crud that were probably on the film emulsion. To remove dust, I would use a combination of making a selection with the Lasso tool and running Dust & Scratches on it where there are large areas, or I'd just spot it out with the rubber stamp tool. Today, however, I might duplicate the layer and offset it by one or two pixels and set the top layer to Darken and then use a layer mask to apply the fix in specific areas. The Healing Brush and Patch tools would just grab crud from other areas."

**Everyone at their best 1:** "This was the most important part and had to really stand out so each person could be identified. The mid tone was completely mud and the image overall was soft (not sharp). To fix this, I started by duplicating the background layer and sharpened the life out of it using USM."

**Everyone at their best 2:** "There were still some light specs in the dark areas that revealed themselves. Next I added a Curves adjustment layer and increased the contrast by a lot. Then I added a layer mask for each of these two layers and painted the lightened/sharpened people back into view."

**From the top....** "There was a lot of 'stuff' in the sky that had to be taken out. My solution was to replace it completely, but I had to emulate the sky that was there so it looked natural. That's why I didn't make it too dark at the top. I made it just dark enough to give the canopy separation but look like it was in front of the same sky. I also extended the image off the top just so there was extra. This was done by tracing the sky with the Pen tool and filling it with a gentle gradient."

**...to the bottom:** "There were all kinds of ugly stuff on the tarmac. I just cloned good parts over the bad parts and extended the image to the bottom of the scan by continuing to clone."

# MASTER ARCHITECTURAL RETOUCHING

PLANNING, CREATIVITY AND COLOUR BALANCE CAN GIVE A FLAT IMAGE VISUAL DEPTH AND AN EVOCATIVE LOOK

**T**he job of architectural retouching is to make a shot of a building more than merely a photograph. It should represent the idealised physical reality of the building, removing the extraneous clutter of city life (cars, traffic signs, litter) and enhancing the scene with better lighting, an improved sky, and a sense of calm focus that makes the building the star. To do this, you'll need to master retouching and compositing techniques.

Retouching and compositing is just like assembling a 1000-piece puzzle. For every tiny

piece that you connect, you will be one step closer to completion. To avoid becoming overwhelmed, focus on the part, not the whole.

No matter what type of image you need to work on, it will come with many different challenges. Before you start retouching, pretend you have already finished. What does the image look like? What steps did you take to create it? Start every project by planning backwards. Imagine the steps you are going to need to take to get the project where you want it. Look at the various elements that you are going to use, and try working out all

the problems in your head first. Figuring out how you would solve the issues up front will make it easier once you get into the complex part of the retouching later. Fifteen minutes now could save you hours later.

During the planning phase, you may want to create a quick and loose mock-up for yourself. You might even scribble some notes across the image to help guide you in the right direction. Give yourself a bird's-eye view of the project before you get in deep with the details. Ready? Let's get started.





## OUR EXPERT

**JOHN ROSS**

[www.TheArtOfRetouching.com](http://www.TheArtOfRetouching.com)

John educates photographers and retouchers by helping them expand their creativity through Photoshop from his website, and the classes he teaches from New Haven, Connecticut.

## SOURCE FILES

The image used for this tutorial can be found at [dreamstime.com/stock-images-building-modern-architecture-image7184644](http://dreamstime.com/stock-images-building-modern-architecture-image7184644).

## WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM STOCK PHOTO  
TO FINISHED ART



Progress 1: Planning



Progress 2: Correcting, cloning and compositing



Progress 3: Final effects



## 01 PLANNING AHEAD

When starting a new project, everything seems to be uphill battles with very complex solutions. Try and pace yourself. Don't tackle everything at once. Plan it out, and take it one step at a time. Create a to-do list with notes for yourself. Maybe even put together a quick composite to see where you are going.

“Don't tackle everything at once. Plan it out, and take it one step at a time”



## 02 TECHNICAL ISSUES

Before detailed retouching, start by getting the technical details out of the way. This image is supplied in an Untagged Color Profile. Use Edit>Convert to Profile and make it AdobeRGB, which is a safe profile to use as it is a common industry standard. Resize the artwork to match the final printed size, if it will be larger than the existing file. If it will print smaller, keep the larger size. For magazine work, keep in mind the gutter (gap between the pages), and the outside bleed that will be trimmed.



## 03 TOUGH CLONING

Start by clicking the 'Create New Layer' button in the Layers palette. Clone the background building from the right side, to left. There is just enough information to add the entire left side of the building. Once you get the first row completed, then clone down two more times, making a duplicate pattern. Right now, it's three rows of an exact match, but you can fix it later. Bit by bit, it starts to come together. Before you know it, the task will be done, and no-one will know.



## 04 PACE YOURSELF

Before getting into the creative part, start by correcting the severe flaws first. When you find yourself stressing over the details, zoom out. How bad is it? Stop 'pixel peeping' and getting too close. If it's not noticeable, then don't worry about it. No one will ever look as closely as you are. In this case, we have just started fixing things. There is still plenty of time to work out any remaining problems once you get to the later stages, and can see the image coming together.

# QUICK TIP

While lens flares create drama and add unity to your images, try to use them sparingly. Photoshop comes with a few limited flares. If you enjoy using them, you should look into the Knoll Light Factory plug-in, which comes with several dozen completely different and customisable flare types.



## 05 LOWER BUILDING

The back building on the left has the same roofline, with the building in front of it. Drop the background building to offset it. This will help create some added depth, and make it clear they are two different buildings. Also, by dropping the building down and cloning from the ground up, you will find that you can easily cover over the car so it's gone. This is why working on separate layers for all the parts is so important.



## 06 SCALE THE GROUND

After cloning over the car, you can select all the layers and use Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E to merge all selected layers into a new flattened layer. Usually, you should avoid doing this as it is a permanent change, leaving old layers behind. But in this case, the option we need to use will only work on flattened layers. Use the Lasso to select the left side of the ground. Use Edit>Content-Aware Scale to stretch out the ground so that it stretches the brick pattern in a believable way.



## 07 SCALE THE SKY

Once again, use Edit>Content-Aware Scale, only this time you will be grabbing the left of the sky. There is a huge difference between using Edit>Free Transform, and Edit>Content-Aware Scale. Basically, this tool will try to keep solid objects from stretching, and prefers to distort big, open areas. For this sky, you will find that it pushes the clouds apart by adding more blue between them. The goal here is to fill in extra white space on the left, but not distort any of the clouds themselves.



## 08 DOOR REFLECTIONS

The doors that you cloned in will appear to have a repeating pattern. By adding a random reflection, it will be less obvious. Select the Combined layer, Ctrl/right-click, and select 'Convert to Smart Object'. Select the glass on the doors however you would like, and add several filters to add the illusion of depth and transparency. Play with different filters to see what you can get. Try Filter>Distort>Ripple, Filter>Pixelate>Facet, Filter>Render>Clouds, and Filter>Render>Fibers. The first one will apply the selection as a Smart Filter Mask.



## 09 DOOR DETAILS

At this point, you should start focusing in on some of the details for the doors. While the previous reflections help quite a lot, taking the time to add highlights and shadows around the frame of the doors will really help. Also be sure to include some final touches on the door windows by adding some shading to the top and bottoms. Maybe even add some door handles. This will once again break up the impression of having a repeating pattern across the various doors.



**10 SMART OBJECTS**  
Select all of your layers, and use the slide-out menu to select 'Convert to Smart Object'. Select the new Smart Object layer, and drag it onto the 'Create New Layer' icon. One layer will be used for the background sky; the other layer will be for the foreground building. By separating them, we can colour-correct more easily. We now have a complete full-sized image, with the basic elements laid out where we want them. Time to start creative retouching!

**12 LAYER ORDER MATTERS**  
Before the heavy retouching, consider your imaginary layering order. How will the parts stack together? Which elements will be created by hand and which ones can be filters? Which parts need adjustment layers, and which can be done in the Camera Raw filter? What is in the foreground, what goes in the background? How do things group together? Keep your pixel layers on the bottom, and adjustment layers on top. If you can keep them separate, it will allow for more flexibility later on.



**001 PREPARE FOR SUCCESS**

Create a list of things you need to get done before starting. Planning up front will help you avoid problems later

**002 FIXING CORE PROBLEMS**

When working with stock images, who knows where the images came from? Be prepared to spend some time fixing basic issues

**003 FOCUS ON DETAILS**

Take the time to create subtle highlights and allow objects to pass through each other. The results are worth the effort

**004 ENJOY THE CREATIVITY**

Even on the most technical images, there is still a world of play and experimentation to explore. Who knows what will happen?

**QUICK TIP**

Camera Raw Filter comes with the same power as Adobe Camera Raw. Only now, you can use it on any layer from within Photoshop. If used on a Smart Object, it will become a Smart Filter. This will give you the ability to jump in and out as you develop your images.



**11 MASKING THE BUILDING**  
While some retouchers prefer to silhouette with the Pen tool, learning how to use the Quick Mask (Q) and a small brush will give the most realistic results. Once the building is outlined, fill the mask in. Using the Magic Wand and Select>Modify>Expand 5-8 pixels, then filling with black, will overlap any soft edges. Push the Q key again to come out of Quick Mask. Select the top layer, and click the 'Add Layer Mask' button at the bottom of the Layers palette to apply the mask.



**13 CUT IN MASKING**  
During the silhouetting stage, pay close attention to details. You need to come close to the edge, but be sure not to drift over the side. Leave a few pixels behind that will be cut off from the mask. No one will miss a few pixels when you cut in. If you cut wide, everyone will see it as a mistake. Generally, when zooming in 200-400%, leave 3-4 pixels behind. This will give the clean result you are looking for.



**14 COLOUR CORRECTIONS**  
Now that the foreground and background elements are separated, you can use Filter>Camera Raw Filter to make your colour and tonal changes on the building layer. Be sure to enhance the warm tones, and really pull out the sunset colours. On the bottom sky layer, you can give the blue a much darker and deeper tone. Use the Graduated Filter to really bring out the deep blue and warm oranges from the various directions. Because this has nothing to do with the building, you can play with it more easily.

“Smart Objects and adjustment layers provide the flexibility necessary to give you a truly non-destructive workflow”



**15 MISSING RAILING** Notice how there is a railing that runs from the right to the left at the base of the tower, but then stops? This is poor cloning on the image as it's been supplied. The simple solution is to push the 'Create New Layer' button at the bottom of the Layers palette. Use the Eye Dropper to grab the same colour from the existing railing. Use the Brush tool to begin painting with a small brush. Add some reflections to the railing as well.



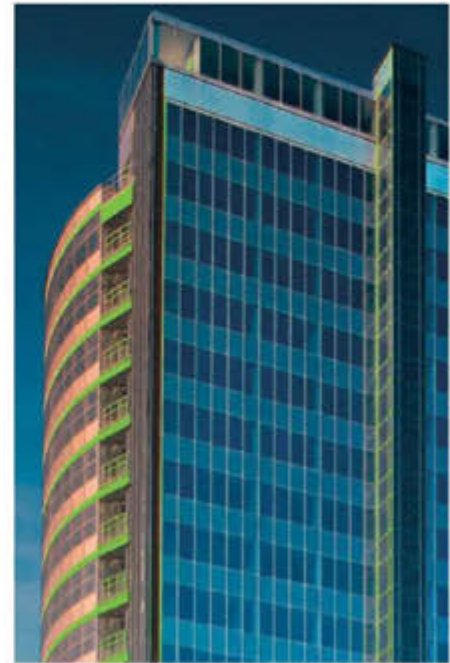
**18 LENS FLARE** Make the image more dynamic by adding a lens flare. You could either use one built into Photoshop from Filters>Render>Lens Flare, or use one from the Knoll Light Factory plug-in, which has dozens to choose from. This image was created with Knoll's Flash Gordon settings. To do this, create a black layer on top. Ctrl/right-click and select 'Convert to Smart Object'. Change the blend mode to Screen, and then select a lens flare of your choice. This will add it to the layer as an adjustable Smart Filter.



**16 SIDE BUILDING** Some more depth can be added to the left side building. Push it further into the distance by lightening the shadows with Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves and bring the left side of the curve up. As objects go into the distance, they become lighter with fewer details. You can also add some more sunset warmth as well, by using Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Photo Filter at 41%. You can also adjust the tones by highlighting certain elements to give it more depth with Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Exposure set to +17.



**19 TOWER REFLECTIONS** To add cloud reflections on the tower, start by creating a new blank layer and filling with Filter>Render>Clouds. Select the layer, Ctrl/right-click, and select "Convert to Smart Object". Next, you need to grab the dark blues by using Select>Color Range. When you think you have it, push the OK button. You can refine the selection by pushing the Q key for the Quick Mask mode. When done, hit the Q key again. Try various filters to see what you get, like Filter>Distort>Ripple and Filter>Distort>ZigZag.



**17 TOWER HIGHLIGHTS** Sometimes, you really need to pay attention to the small things, like adding some extra highlight details onto the sunny side of the tower. Using a Quick Mask (Q) and a very small brush, paint along the brightest parts of the tower, shown here in green. When you have all the little parts selected, hit the Q key again to come out of the Quick Mask. Then select Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Curves to lighten up the highlighted areas. This will give added depth to the focal point of the image.



**20 FINAL CORRECTIONS** Now you can finally see your vision come to life. Finish by going into the various Smart Objects and adjustment layers and tweak any of the colours, exposures, or filters. You may not have completed all the changes you laid out back in step one, but at least you had a guide. By following along with these steps, you will find amazing flexibility in your file structures. Smart Objects and adjustment layers provide the flexibility necessary to give you a truly non-destructive workflow.



# COMBINE PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS

LEARN HOW TO CREATE AN EXCITING, PAINTERLY PORTRAIT ILLUSTRATION FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND TEXTURES

**Y**ou don't have to be a whizz with the Brush tool to create an effective digital painting. In this tutorial, you'll discover how to transform a vintage photo of James Dean into a colourful illustration using just some simple photo-editing techniques and a creative use of textures. With the methods explained over the next few pages, you'll be able to create a dynamic composition that blends the iconography of 50s Americana with images of James Dean's beloved sports cars, his passion for which would sadly lead

to his famous demise on Route 41 in California. Photoshop is the most comprehensive tool for editing photographs and is ideal for this particular trip. Along the road you will learn how to separate photographs for editing, master layer masks, and effectively manipulate textures to create an organic, painted feel for your image. Everything you'll need to build the illustration is supplied on FileSilo, but you're encouraged to bring your own creativity to some of the following techniques in order to fully explore the possibilities for this illustration and your future portfolio.



## OUR EXPERT

**ANDY POTTS**  
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@AndyPottsTweet

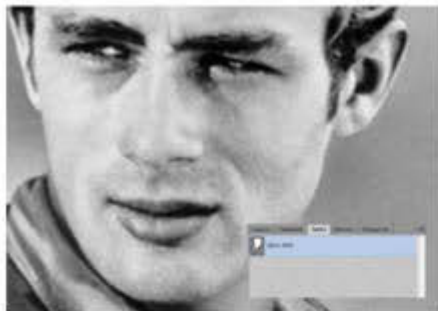
Andy Potts is an award-winning, London-based illustrator and animator. He's been commissioned by a wide variety of clients in advertising, publishing and design and his eye-catching illustrations have appeared in many international newspapers and magazines.

## SOURCE FILES

The files on [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) include a public domain photo of James Dean and a mixture of personal photography and textures to create an effective, painterly look.

## PREPARING THE STOCK IMAGES

CUT OUT THE PORTRAIT AND ADD A HALFTONE EFFECT



### 01 CREATE A HEAD-SHAPED PATH

Start by opening 'James\_Dean.jpg'. You need to remove his head from the background. You can do that more accurately using the Path tool. Go to Paths and create a new layer. With the Pen tool, start working your way around, adjusting the anchor points to create smooth curves where needed.



### 02 CUT OUT JAMES DEAN

Once the path is created, you can select it by clicking with the cursor over the Path thumbnail window and holding down Cmd/Ctrl. With the shape selected, create a new layer for it with Layer via Copy (Cmd/Ctrl+J) and you can begin to edit it. Ensure that the image is greyscale as you'll be using black and white before colouring.



### 03 ADD A HALFTONE EFFECT

As the photo isn't the greatest resolution, it helps to work with a halftone as well as the original to give added detail and a print feel. It's good practice to duplicate a layer before adding an effect, so once that's done go to Filter>Filter Gallery and choose Halftone Pattern. Use a Size of 2 and set Contrast to 25.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM VINTAGE TO FRESH



Progress 1: Cut out photos



Progress 2: Layer textures on a photo



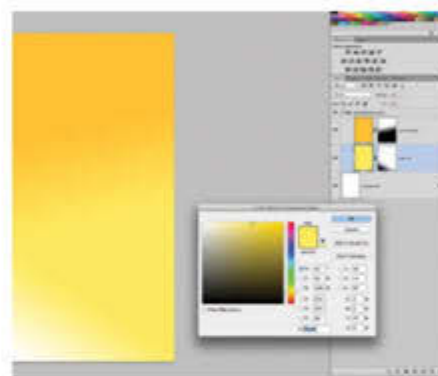
Progress 3: Build a dynamic composition



**04 | ADJUST LEVELS** After halftoning, you can adjust the contrast even further by using Levels to get good edges. Set Input values to 0, 2.90 and 165. To use these dark areas as a shape, you need to separate them using Color Range. Select the head and go to Select>Color Range. I tend to select the opposite tone to the one I need as this gives a more defined edge. So choose white as the sampled colour and set Fuzziness to 200. Okay that then go to Select>Inverse to choose the black before using Layer via Copy to move to a new layer.



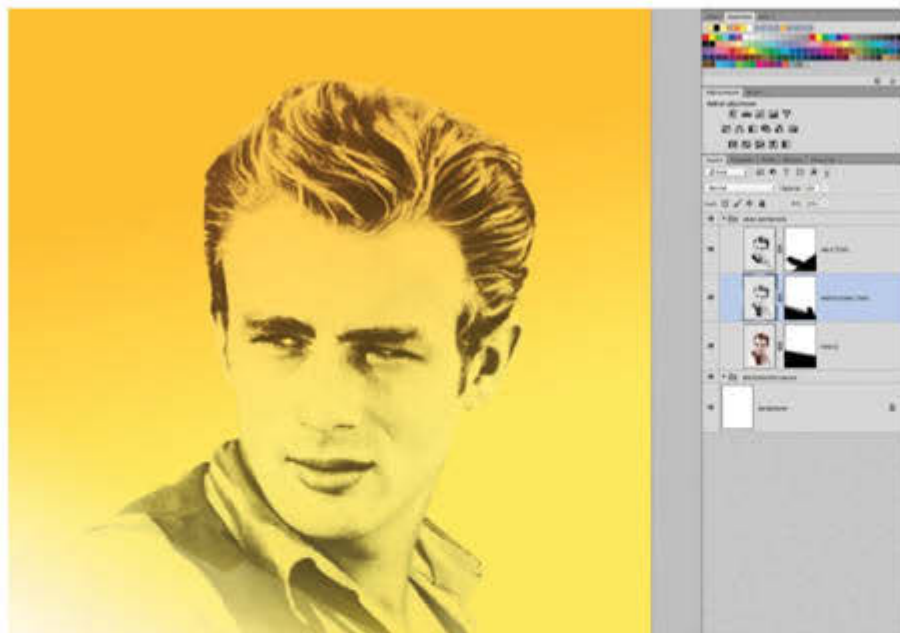
**05 | SEPARATE TONAL AREAS** You need to repeat the process of levelling, colour ranging and separating on the original non-halftoned head to get a wider range of dark facial tones separated on a layer as well. Go back to an earlier duplicated layer and go through the previous techniques. You should now have James Dean's darker facial areas in halftone and a regular range on separate layers to begin editing with. This is a process I use regularly to break down any photograph into its component light and dark areas and will be used again later in the tutorial.



**06 | CREATE A BACKGROUND COLOUR** I've worked with an A3-sized image, so create a new document in Photoshop at 300dpi. You'll use a yellow background, so start by filling the area with a bright, paler yellow. You can create a dark to light range by adding a layer mask to this and using the Gradient tool to make the bottom-left side transparent so the white background comes through. Create a new layer above the yellow and fill it with a darker and warmer yellow. Add another layer mask to this and fade off the bottom half.

■ QUICK TIP

Be sure to duplicate layers before applying effects or altering beyond recognition. It's always useful to retain the original shapes to refer to or recycle later on.



**07 | BEGIN THE PORTRAIT** Drag your previously created layers, a halftone, photo dark tones and the original, from the James Dean document into your newly created yellow A3 one and group them. These will provide definition to your painterly layers later. You can make the bottom edges of the Dean image more interesting by adding a layer mask to each and using the Gradient tool to fade off at different points. To be more creative, you can open one of the brush PSDs and use that selected shape in the layer masks to delete areas around the edges and create more dynamic shapes.



**08 | PASTE IN COLOUR** Set the original Dean layer to Soft Light at 50%, the Photo Dark Tone to Overlay at 50% and Halftone to Overlay at 35%. You can start to build colour into the portrait now, so open up 'red\_blue\_colour\_wash.jpg'. I like to use bright, high-contrasting colours, and this was created with a red/blue Gradient Map on a basic watercolour texture. Copy this texture then select your Photo Dark Tone layer area and go to Edit>Paste Special>Paste Into. You can now move this coloured texture around within the layer mask to see what look works for you and achieve an instant pop art feel. Move the colour layer beneath the original face tone layers.

## ■ TEXTURING THE IMAGE

GIVE YOUR ILLUSTRATION AN ORGANIC FEEL

### 09 | ADD UNUSUAL TEXTURES

It's fun to experiment with unusual textures to see what effects can be achieved and to take advantage of happy accidents. Included on the disc is a photo of a distressed paint texture called 'chipped\_paint.jpg'. Open this and Paste Into the same area as your colour wash. Once again, move the texture around until satisfied, then experiment with layer blending settings and opacity. For this you can settle on a reasonably subtle 40% on Normal.



### 10 | GRADIENT MAPPING THE FACE

You need an underlying skin tone for the portrait, so go back to the original Dean layer and duplicate it. Use Levels to boost the black and white contrast if you need to, then select a light and dark flesh tone in the foreground/background colour palettes. Go to Image>Adjustments>Gradient Map and apply those colours to the black and white areas. This should give a good flesh tone base to be placed under the colour and definition layers.

“It's fun to experiment with unusual textures to see what effects can be achieved and to take advantage of happy accidents”

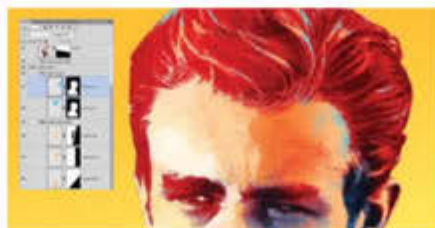
### 11 | PAINT WITHOUT BRUSHES

Now you're going to start 'painting' the face without brushes. Use the Paste Into technique as it's a versatile way to build up really interesting visuals quickly. Open up 'Splat\_1.psd' and colour it with a pale yellow. Copy it and Paste Into the Gradient Map Dean head shape. Move the splats to the left side of the face in the layer masks. Experiment with placement and rotation to lighten that area and try a Screen layer blend effect. I've duplicated this layer three times with different placements. Open 'rshach.psd' and repeat the process, rotating the texture in the layer mask and picking out the nose to highlight.



### 12 | BUILD UP TEXTURE LAYERS

Now you need to darken the right side of the head to add definition. Colour the 'rschach.psd' with a dark flesh tone colour and paste it into the Gradient Map Dean head shape as before. Rotate and position to create a darker line down the central face area. You can further edit these texture shapes by selecting the layer mask head shape then Layer via Copying the texture to a new layer. Add a new layer mask to this and fade the texture off one side for instance. Experiment with blue splat colours within the head mask shape to pick out forehead and hair elements.



### 13 | PICK OUT DETAILS

You've been building up paint textures under your original face tone layers. Now you can start to paste in various coloured splats into the Photo Dark Tones shape and layer them on top. Try out yellow, orange and blue splats, placing them at the edges of eyebrows, lips and hair to pick out details. Change the layer blending modes to achieve interesting colour combinations. Create a simple shape with the Lasso tool on a layer and fill with a lip colour placed under the face tones. Do the same with the whites of the eyes.



## ■ CREATING THE LANDSCAPE

ADD THE ROAD, MOUNTAIN AND DINER



**14 DEEPEN THE BACKGROUND**  
Now the head is in a good place, you can start to develop the background and composition. Deepen the colour background by opening 'orange\_yellow\_wash.jpg' and placing it behind the portrait. Use a layer mask and the Gradient tool to fade it off on the left side. Use the 'rschach.psd' shape to build up an interesting light texture on the left using Overlay blending modes and two layers with differing texture placements.



**15 MAKE A MOUNTAIN**  
You can begin to build up the background landscape, starting with some distant mountains. Open up 'mountain.psd' and duplicate it onto a layer with an Overlay layer blend. Use a layer mask on this to fade off the top and bottom and use 'brush.psd' to create an interesting edge on the right within the mask. Duplicate this to create a Gradient Map colour version using a yellow and blue to substitute the white/black areas. Place above the overlay and fade off to the right so it blends into the overlay beneath.



**16 ADD THE LANDSCAPE**  
Your composition needs a road, so open up 'back\_road.psd' and place it into the document. To separate the road from the terrain, use Color Range to pick out the grey tarmac and reduce Fuzziness to 60 to get a clearer selection. Use Layer via Copy to put the road on a new layer, then fill it with a flat, warm grey. Use a Lasso tool to quickly select and delete any loose pixels around the road edges. Switch the back\_road photo layer underneath to Overlay blend mode at 90% and fade off the top, bottom and right using layer masking and the Gradient tool.



**17 OPEN A DINER**  
The diner is an essential icon of 50s Americana, so you're going to work one into the composition. Open up 'diner.psd' and 'diner\_sign.psd'. Greyscale them both and up the contrast with Levels sufficiently so that you can select a good black tone image using the Color Range technique from earlier. Place the separated black tone layers of both into the comp as shown and fill with a flat, orange colour. Fill another layer of the diner with blue and fade that off to the right side with a layer mask to give a blue to orange colour gradient. You can duplicate another diner layer and apply Filter> Blur> Motion Blur to achieve a speeding-past effect when Multiplied onto the layer beneath.



**18 ADD A FRAMING DEVICE**  
To bring the composition together you're going to add a circular frame in the background. Open 'circle.psd' and place it behind Dean's head as shown. Switch the layer blending mode to Overlay to give a sun-like luminescence. To make the shape more interesting, you're going to make it more intricate by removing areas. Open 'chequer.psd' and place into the comp at the bottom-right of the circle. Select the chequer shape and use this to delete from the circle in a layer mask. This offers a design counterpoint to the chequer design on the diner and suggests chequered flags and speed. Open 'palmtrees.psd' and do the same with palmtree 1 behind the diner sign. Place the palmtree layer underneath to also add definition. Place the white palmtree 2 layer to the left of the diner at the edge of the circle.

### ■ USING LAYER MASKS TO CREATE A DISTRESSED IMAGE

A technique that is employed here frequently is using paint splatter textures to create distressed masked edges. By creating a layer mask on an image, you can work away in the safety of the black and white matte area while retaining the original shape on the layer. Once you've selected a paint splatter shape, you can then position the selection in the layer mask and fill with black to remove portions of the image on the layer or with white to make visible again. If used effectively then your image can take on a more painted, organic look or appear distressed at the edges.



#### ■ QUICK TIP

A good way to quickly merge many layers and create a new layer with everything included to make new edits to is by holding down Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+E.



## 19 GET SOME WHEELS

You're now going to add the vehicle that Dean famously took his last drive in, the Porsche 550 Spyder. Open 'porsche.psd' and place into the composition. Use the Color Range technique to separate the dark tones of the vehicle and use 'red\_blue\_colour\_wash.jpg' to Paste Into it to add vibrant colour. Place the dark tone layer above and switch to an Overlay blend mode to add definition. Open 'shape.psd' and fill with a pale blue before pasting into the full shape of the cover to give a base colour. Use Magic Wand to select the numbers and pick them out with a red colour. To fill the interior with a red hue, create a path around the seat and window frame to select. The same can be done for the headlights to fill with white.



## 22 NEED FOR SPEED

To emphasise the sense of speed, add some line work. To create simple colour lines that follow the curve of the road, select the road path already created. Fill with a bright colour then move the selection to the right by holding Shift and clicking the right arrow twice. Now delete, leaving behind a thin, curved line that tails off. Repeat this with other colours and use the Gradient tool with layer masks to fade the ends of the lines off smoothly. Open 'speed\_line1.psd' and 'speed\_line2.psd' and place them in the composition as shown. Fill the speed\_line1 with yellow to blend with the edge of the car.

### ■ QUICK TIP

Using actual scanned-in paint textures in your work can lend the image an authentic painterly look that can be more effective than digital painting, which can sometimes have a synthetic look.



## 20 ROADWORKS

You're going to continue the road from the background to the foreground to place behind the car. To do this, create a path to achieve the smooth curve of the road. Take the anchor points to the background road to create a believable continuation. Select the newly created path shape and fill with the warm grey colour before opening up 'tarmac.psd' to Paste Into the road shape for texture. Switch the layer blend mode to Overlay at 90%.



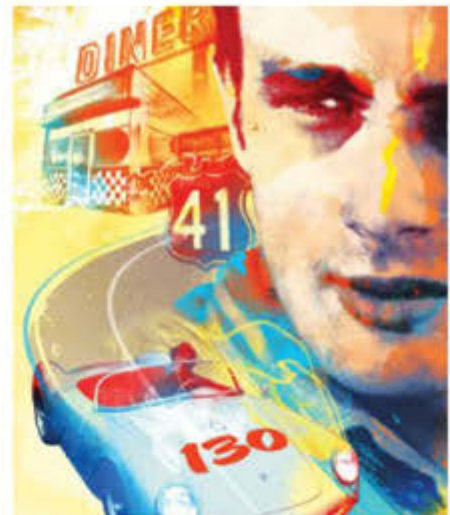
## 23 TWEAK THE EDGES

Now the illustration is almost complete, it's time for tweaking. The solid edge of Dean's head could do with being a little more organic, so to make it easier to edit, collect all the Dean paint and colour layers into a group separate from the original photo definition layers. Duplicate the group and merge it to create one easily editable layer, then turn off the original group layer. Create a layer mask for it and use the selection of 'splat\_1.psd' to delete areas around the top edges of Dean's head in the mask until satisfied. Fill a couple of layers with blue and yellow splats to place under these edited areas to create a painterly interaction with the background.



## 21 ADD PAINTERLY TOUCHES

You're going to integrate the car into the scene a little more by adding a few painterly textures. Open 'paint\_texture.psd' and paste into the composition. Fill it with yellow and place near the rear of the car, switching to a Color Dodge layer blend mode to give a painterly highlight. Open up 'brush.psd' and fill with blue to place at the front of the car, creating forward movement. Experiment by pasting some blue splats into the bottom area of Dean's shirt near the car to visually connect to it and add to the rushing effect around the car.



## 24 LAST-MINUTE DECISIONS

An illustration is never really finished and there's always more to be added. Let's add an extra something by the diner and road where it feels a little sparse. Open '41\_sign.psd' and place as shown. Paste 'red\_blue\_colour\_wash' to bring it into the scene and distress it by using a splat selection shape to delete areas in a layer mask as before. Place a yellow fill under the numbers to bring them out. Add a final palm tree (tree 3 from 'palm\_tree.psd') to the right of Dean under the chequer pattern to balance out the comp. That should just about do it.

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“A good poster may have an intriguing composition or a juxtaposition of many elements

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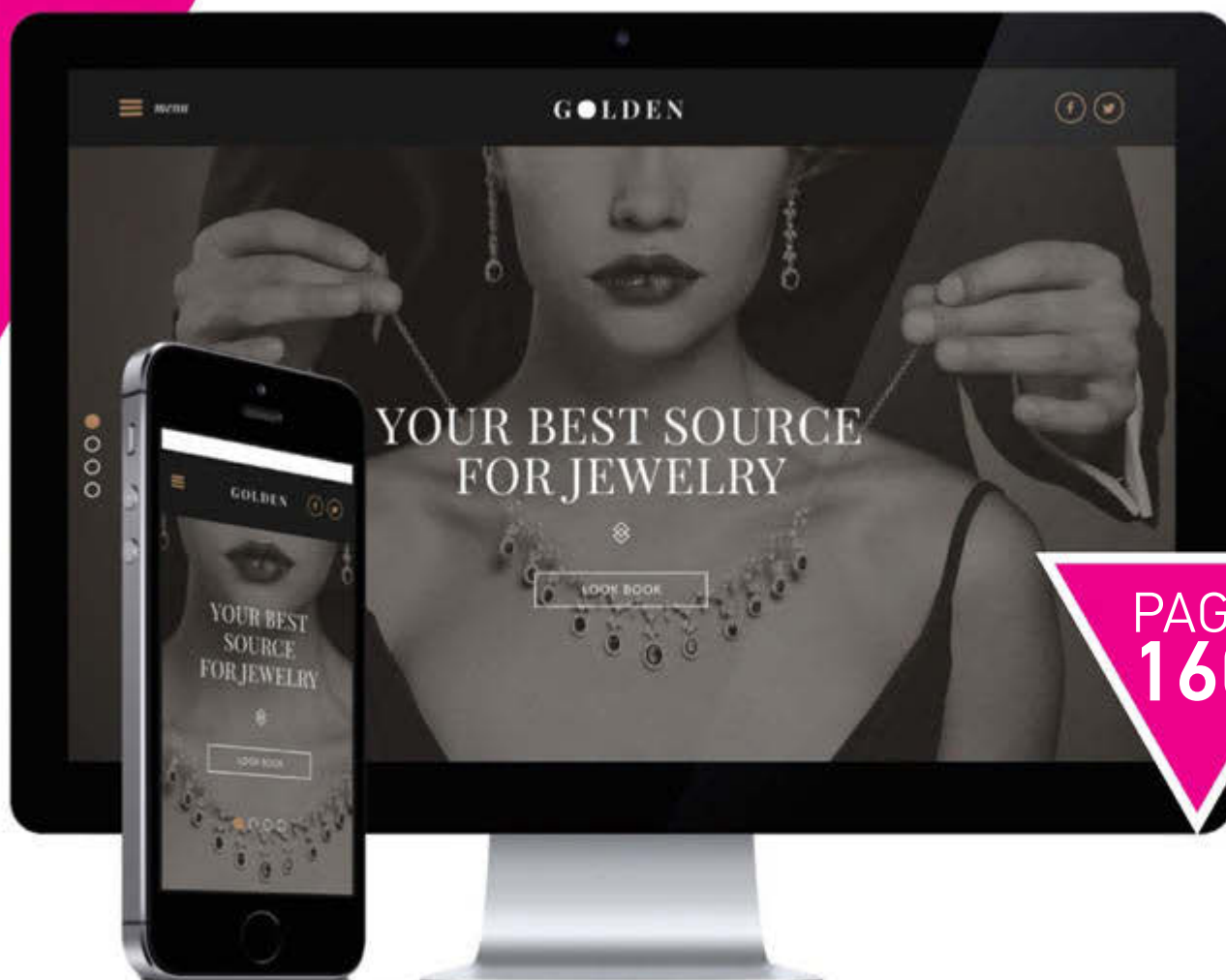


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GRAPHICS AND WEB

# DESIGN ARRESTING POSTERS

YOU'VE GOT TO GRAB YOUR VIEWER'S ATTENTION AND SQUEEZE  
UNTIL THEY CAN'T LET GO. BUT POSTER DESIGN CAN BE FUN TOO...

Andrew Bird

appearing with Kelly Hogan // August 20th, 2012  
Holland Performing Arts Center. // Omaha, NE

© Eric Nyffeler

Posters are everywhere. They feature a particular juxtaposition of word and image (though it needn't contain both) that somehow sees them sum up the zeitgeist like no other form of graphic design.

"A good poster demands attention," explains Neal Williams ([www.epicproblems.com](http://www.epicproblems.com)). "It may have an intriguing or flowing composition or it may have a juxtaposition of elements that tells an interesting story. It doesn't necessarily need to put the information the poster is relating front and centre, but the poster should draw the viewer in so that the viewer wants to find out what it is all about."

Making the viewer active in 'reading' the poster is key. "First, it should tell a story," says Mark Forsman ([www.markforsman.com](http://www.markforsman.com)), "and it should tell that story whether you're 20 feet away or right up in front of it. It should change as you approach it and grow with depth and detail." Forsman describes his own as "nature inspired... rustic with a dirty, handmade feeling..." In contrast, Eric Nyffeler ([www.doe-eyed.com](http://www.doe-eyed.com)) says he "combines the flat, geometric shapes and bright colours of mid-century American illustration with the bold typography and slightly psychedelic concepts of 1960s/1970s European (specifically Polish) posters. The brightly coloured flat geometry of my illustrations combine easily with large, bold typography and work especially well in the context of screen printing."

Glen Brogan ([www.albinoraven.com](http://www.albinoraven.com)) looks back to older designs, drawing inspiration from

## DEFINING DETAILS

THE DETAIL-RICH STYLE OF NEAL WILLIAMS REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE PRECISION, BUT THANKFULLY HE HAS PHOTOSHOP'S PEN TOOL ON HAND

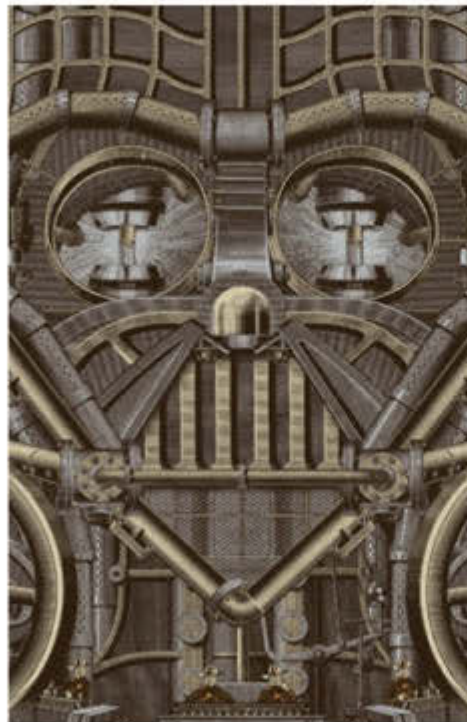
"The Pen tool is definitely my go-to Photoshop feature," says Neal Williams. "With screenprinting, you need to 'trap' colours under the linework, since inevitably things will shift or the paper will expand or shrink and you need a little wiggle room to keep the colours in registration (lined up). So, when creating colour fills in my poster designs, I'll zoom way in and make thousands of points inside the linework to create the selections that I fill with colour. Sometimes, if the linework forms an uninterrupted outline, I can select areas or select and then inverse other areas to fill with colour, but other times the Pen tool is the way to go. I tend to enjoy the monotonous aspects of poster design."



© Neal Williams

"old cartoons, illustrations, and the mid-century modern design aesthetic, so I like to give my work a retro feel. I think part of why I like that is because most people have a fondness for the look and feel of an older time. I also think it's because that retro aesthetic is genuinely based on really good, solid design." As someone who has worked for Marvel and Disney, Matt Ferguson ([www.cakesandcomics.com](http://www.cakesandcomics.com)) likes to call his style "illustrated minimalism. By that I mean I will boil down a subject into one idea or scene but illustrate it fully."

Some poster designers have been lucky enough to really collaborate with the artists their posters are for, and that can be a great way to find inspiration. As Rob Jones ([www.animalrummy.com](http://www.animalrummy.com)) puts it, "I've been fortunate so far in that I've done most of my work for Jack White and his various bands, where my personal tastes appear in line with their own thematic pursuits." Some poster designers come to the art because they love the endeavours the posters are about, and others have a style that just begs to be blown up and hung on the wall.



## A FRESH VISION OF AN OLD FAVOURITE

ROB JONES REVEALS HOW HE CREATED THIS STRIKING VISION OF DARTH VADER FOR MONDO/ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE

### 01 FROM IMAGE TO ENGRAVING

I started off selecting a straight image of Vader's helmet to guide image construction. Then I tried out images from various collections of mechanical engravings. In the first few I had a weird girder of sorts to define the outside edge of his 'mouth' that didn't seem to define that area well enough before switching it out for a heavier piece.

### 02 BACK TO BLACK?

Too much metallic copper in this instance felt showy. Limiting it to just the eyes made it feel like the Vader image was wearing hunting shades. I decided in the end to limit the copper to the already-established costume colours of the cowboy clones.

### 03 WINDOWS OF THE SOUL

Vader's eyes were a big issue. He looked too surprised with the round portals used. I tried several options and flirted with making them into windows with an exposed skeleton inside (the bare soul behind the armour)... Here's a fun fact: I took the kanji for 'death' and placed it five times on the final image to form the points of an inverted pentagram. I thought it would be a funny way of having a 'death star' in there.

© Rob Jones



**The Rainbow:** The father of modern posters, Jules Chéret is still much admired and copied today

Posters are an ancient artform but their golden age began in the 1800s. Like no other, artist Jules Chéret can be considered the father of the modern poster. Using the recent invention of lithography, he became the driving force of a wave of bright, clear designs combining text and illustration. Artists of the avant-garde movement also embraced the medium, usually to advertise luxury goods. The feeling of excess, the colourful style and the prominent female figure, of which Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's 1891 Moulin Rouge poster is probably the most famous, were the key to their appeal. Lucian Bernhard then pushed the form in a sparer direction, which focussed on the product and the information. Then came World War I and the era of the propaganda poster. After the wars it was Swiss design and typography – with its clarity and well-to-do sophistication – that came to prominence.

"Design trends come and go," says Nyffeler, "each having their time in the spotlight. While the last decade saw some hugely popular scenes based in minimalism and Swiss-inspired design,



**On The Job For Victory:** The First World War allowed the patriotic propaganda poster to flourish

there currently seems to be a strong resurgence in highly technical and incredibly detailed draftsmanship that draws as much from 19th Century commercial art as it does Renaissance printmaking." But while these influences are certainly felt in modern poster design, today's designers are often most drawn to what happened in the 1960s and onwards.

Because today's teenagers might have profile pictures and ringtones too, but it's always been with the posters on their walls – the tennis girl, the *Trainspotting* line-up or Che Guevara – that young people declare their identity. By putting up posters, people scream to the world, "This is who I am." This can be traced to the 1960s, when the dominance of photography in print advertising and the cultural power of pop and rock music saw the dawn of the psychedelic poster. Lurid colours, suggestive poses and cool were the name of the game.

Frank Kozik was the artist that first hooked Jones into poster design. "I saw his works in the pulpy flesh for the first time at some London record store in 1993," he says. "It was so brashly

**Stiller:** The product-orientated work of Lucian Bernhard demonstrates how he brought a simplicity to poster design



© Neal Williams

## TELL A TALE

NEAL WILLIAMS EXPLAINS HOW HE TRIES TO ENTICE THE VIEWER IN

"In the type of illustration-heavy poster design I do," explains Williams, "I feel like the composition always works best when it tells some kind of a story. For instance, I did a poster recently that just looks like a large tree as seen from a low viewpoint. From a distance it's just a tree, and the interesting perspective may draw you in. But as you look closer there is a deteriorating fence around the tree, and the background field is full of tree stumps. You realize there is some kind of narrative involved." By the time the viewer has realised that, they're involved enough to be reading the text, so "incorporating the text in a way that doesn't feel tacked-on" is also important to Williams. He says: "I always hand-draw my type so it has a natural feel similar to the poster art and I'll try to place it in a creative way that maintains the flow of the composition."

bright with type that was a welcome scream. I fell for his work pretty hard, as evidenced by my early attempts at gigposters in which I unabashedly tried hard to ape his angles. It wasn't until I got the White Stripes gig and produced silkscreens at a rapid clip that I finally managed to develop my own voice. That's usually the way for the folks though, you emulate your heroes until you figure it out (like Buck Owens copying George Jones until he figured out his own distinct twang)."



“Design trends come and go, each having their time in the spotlight. While the last decade saw some hugely popular scenes based in minimalism and Swiss-inspired design, there currently seems to be a strong resurgence in highly technical and incredibly detailed draftsmanship...”

ERIC NYFFELER, [WWW.DOE-EYED.COM](http://WWW.DOE-EYED.COM)

## CARTOON COMPOSITION

GLEN BROGAN REVEALS THE SECRETS OF CREATING POSTERS WITH PLENTY OF DETAILED CARTOON FUN

### 01 | SKETCH START

Computer Space is a poster that Glen Brogan created for his first ever solo show at Gallery 1988 in LA, in the summer of 2013. This shows his “rough drawing of all the characters in the piece, over some even rougher drawings of the background elements.”



### 02 | CONSIDER COLOUR

This is the completed background, which Brogan does so he can make sure the colour and placement of characters will look right. “Composition is definitely something you get a feel for after a while,” he says, “and I think the starting point is to recognise the different visual weights of various design elements, like big versus small, dark colours versus light; things like that.”



### 03 | FIND YOUR STYLE

I think it's important to do things that you can really only do in your specific style,” says Brogan, “and things that work to the advantage of that style. So for example, since I work with a retro cartoon look, I can draw a house using crazy angles that might not make sense if it were to physically exist, but doing so makes for a more interesting drawing overall. I really try to abstract characters and objects in creative ways, which I think comes off as more visually pleasing.



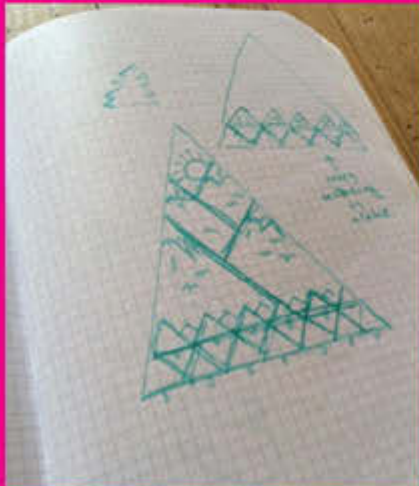
© Glen Brogan

## TEXTURE TALK

ERIC NYFFELER EXPLAINS HOW AUTHENTICITY IS ACHIEVED IN A SKETCH TO VECTOR TO TEXTURED PROCESS

### 01 | BOTTLE YOUR LIGHTNING

"I typically begin my posters with an incredibly rough sketch," says Nyffeler, "usually scribbled in a notebook minutes after waking up or on the back of a napkin while walking down the street." Then he scans his sketch and builds a composition in Illustrator.



### 02 | BUILD IT UP...

"Every piece of the composition is printed in black and white and then textured and distressed using a variety of different processes. 1970s/80s photocopiers are my favourite way of making shapes look trashy and aged. Lacquer thinner and splattered paint are two other common texturing methods."



### 03 | ...BREAK IT DOWN

All of the black and white chunks are then scanned into Photoshop, where I apply Levels, Brightness/Contrast, and very specific Burning and Dodging to refine the shapes to a specific balance of clarity and texture. The individual pieces are then composited together into the specific layers intended for screen printing."



For Ferguson, there are two main factors when it comes to poster construction: "Number one, have a good idea. A poster needs to be able to grab someone's attention, and the best way to do that is with a clever hook. Number two, composition is really important; the poster should be pleasing to the eye and easy to digest visually. With those two things a poster can be simple and easy to execute."

But what if you're not sure if you've got a great idea, or that you're working towards a pleasing composition? Brogan likes to save a preview of his work and look at it thumbnail-sized on his desktop: "I look at it and think, 'Does this still look interesting when it's this small?' If I had no idea what this piece was, would looking at this tiny icon interest me enough to look closer and see what the drawing really is? That's something I do to try and gauge if a piece is going to grab people's attention or not. If it has something that makes it stand out when it's that little, then that can be a sign of a strong design."

A strong design is the goal of course, and many of the tricks and techniques that poster designers use are no different to that which other artists, illustrators and graphic designers would use. For Forsman, the key to composition is balance. "If everything is competing for your eye, there's no way to tell any kind of story and it can completely derail the idea." And you can further use that balance to attract people's eyes, if you simply "have something off. Do as much as you can with as little as you can," adds Forsman.

“I always try and use colour to evoke a sense of place and feeling. It's one of the toughest things to do, but when it's right it can completely transport you”

MARK FORSMAN, [WWW.MARKFORSMAN.COM](http://WWW.MARKFORSMAN.COM)



"I always try to think roughly in triangles," says Ferguson. "Think an upside-down pyramid. So the design draws the eye down to a focal point. I find that my posters are often much more pleasing to the eye if I use this simple trick." That focal point might be the text, and Jones says he tries to integrate "the type directly into the design rather than have it as a separate headline. That usually means your information will become less bold and noticeable, but lately I tend to enjoy quieter posters." Generally this works best for celebratory merchandise posters rather than those directly selling, where Jones "can afford that luxury of sublimating the band's name on occasion. Of course there are times when a bold headline serves the design better."

Of course, colour is one the most important things a poster designer has to play and experiment with. As Williams explains, the limited colour palette necessitated by screenprinting has to always be considered: "I print by hand, so if I'm doing a run of 200 posters, a four-colour poster means 800 passes of the squeegee. That can make for a fairly tiring day's work. Given that, I'll usually try to limit my posters to four or five colours if I'm on a deadline. I tend to favour fairly natural colours. Since I'm often trying to create depth in my posters, I'll use different shades of the same colour to help secondary elements fade into the background and accentuate the focal point."

Colour isn't just about drawing people's attention though, it's also about making them feel what you want them to feel. "I always try and use colour to evoke a sense of place and feeling," explains Forsman. "It's one of the toughest things to do, but when it's right it can completely transport you." To have this mastery of your domain, Ferguson says he tries to keep colours to a minimum: "I always start a poster with a base colour that informs the whole poster. A nice bright colour can be very eye catching, as can the lack of it." Meanwhile, Williams says, "my work relies heavily on the detail and linework in my illustrations. My favourite part of the creative process is being hunched over at my table making fine lines and textures with pen on paper."



## CATCH THE EYE

THE POSTER HAS MANY TRICKS UP ITS SLEEVE, AND THEY CAN BE TEXTUAL AS WELL AS A QUESTION OF COMPOSITION

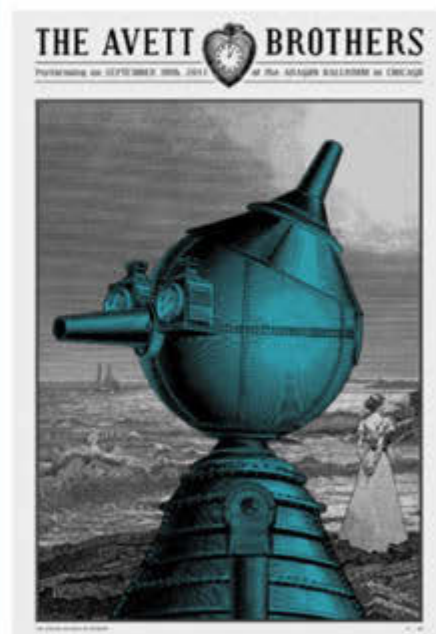
Direct address is one of the poster's great strengths, shown off to perfection in the propaganda poster ('Your Country Needs You' and 'Keep Calm and Carry On') as well as the advertising poster, where a problem the viewer didn't know they had is brought into sharp focus. Humour is another great possibility, whether the gag is verbal or visual, and the simple meanings and associations that we have with different colours can be used to particular great effect when the poster's size means that you can be talking such a physically large space.

Use the constraints of the particular poster genre you're working in as challenges. In music posters you have a lot of freedom, but you need to sum up the feel of the music in visual form. In film posters the most important thing is that it looks like a genuine film poster, and that means studying the genre of film you're promoting and having it fit that mould. Also, don't feature your actors unless they are bona fide movie stars.



**Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes:** "Make the art for yourself," advises Matt Ferguson. "I'm my own worst critic so I just keep going on a poster until I am happy with it."

**The Avett Brothers:** "When creating images from old engravings," explains Rob Jones, "the main process that eats my nights concerns rounding off each engraving line where it meets the edge of another separate engraved image. I zoom in and add a pixel or two on top and bottom for each line so the result feels like an integrated whole."



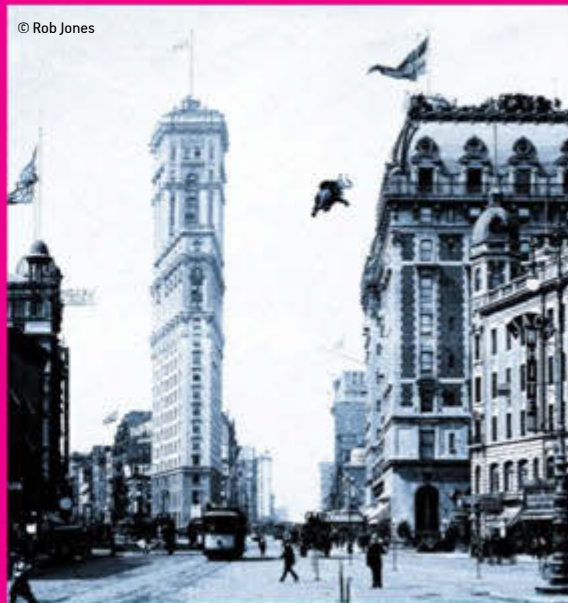
## MAKE IT PERSONAL

ROB JONES LIKES TO MAKE SURE HIS POSTERS HAVE PERSONAL MEANING, EVEN IF THAT MEANING ISN'T EASILY APPARENT TO THE AUDIENCE

"If you make it more personal, then you tend to create more interesting and unique imagery," says Jones, who recently made a poster for Jack White's show at Red Rocks. "I've found most artists who do Red Rocks posters tend to showcase the natural beauty of the venue," says Jones. Instead, he decided to concentrate on the sense of community in the small town of Morrison, where like-minded folks have journeyed to see the music.

"This made me recall a lyric from Jack's recent tune, *That Black Bat Licorice*," says Jones; "And get my feelings hurt / And move to New York like I'm Dumbo". I can't speak to what the lyric meant to Jack, but for me that image of Dumbo moving to NYC evoked the contrast I experienced growing up in Albany, GA, a smaller, more conservative city, compared to my current digs in Austin, TX. I didn't have an easy time in Albany and felt a bit like Dumbo getting pelted with hoots and wide eyes. When I moved to Austin, there were plenty of other elephants with big ears or wearing clown hats and collars. I felt comfortable and unnoticed, like I belonged. I wagered having the same sort of feeling at a Red Rocks show, something tribal, something more than I would experience at a concert held in a regular club atmosphere. When I created the image, I wanted a flying elephant to appear unremarkable against the Times Square backdrop. He's up in the air, but folks on the ground aren't gawking. They've seen it before and accept it as part of their city."

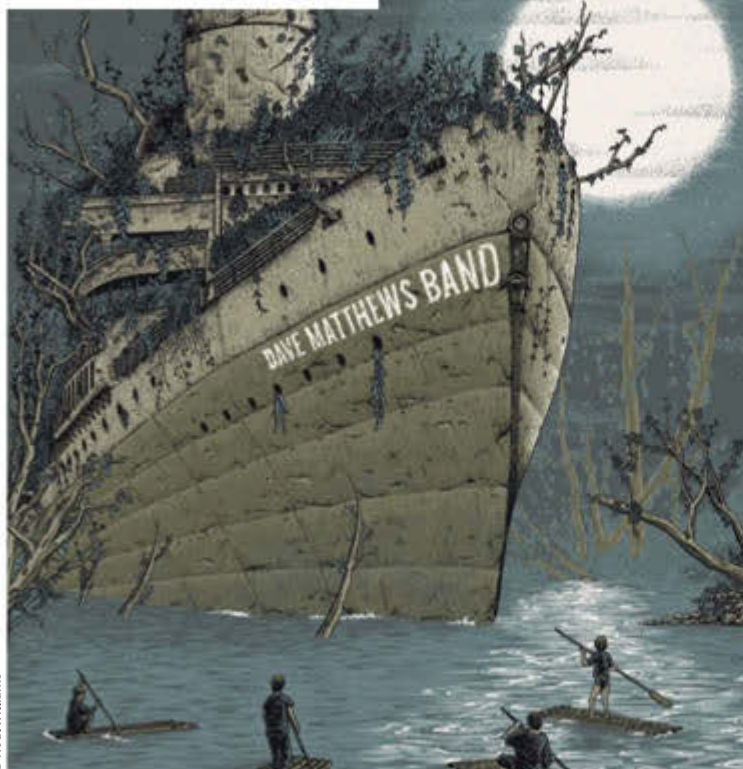
© Rob Jones



“In the mid to late 90s people were seduced by the ease of doing things digitally, but the tools weren't really fully formed to actually make the posters better than traditional art”

MATT FERGUSON, [WWW.CAKESANDCOMICS.COM](http://WWW.CAKESANDCOMICS.COM)

**Dave Matthews Band:** "Recently it seems that artists are playing with form and composition in interesting ways and trying to push their skills as far as possible," says Neal Williams



© Neal Williams

Eye-catching, mood-evoking then, colour is also a way that a poster designer can make their individual style clear. Nyffeler loves "rendering the scenes of [his] posters with non-objective colours, yet still clearly recognisable. Make an ocean green instead of blue. Make a deer pink instead of brown. Make a building orange instead of concrete. Make a mountain purple instead of stone. I think the mind instinctively enjoys seeing familiar subjects represented in subtly new manners."

Demonstrating your own style isn't always the priority though, not if you're working on a commissioned piece. Jones offers a good piece of advice if you work in various different styles: "When I'm hired by a new client, I ask them to go through my work and pick five to ten pieces that they like *and* five to ten pieces that exhibit a style or content they feel inappropriate for the task at hand. The latter usually helps me more than the former in formulating an approach."

Like any other branch of creative endeavour, if you're working to clients' expectations then you need to have one eye on what the next big hot trend is. At the moment, Jones says that "heavy illustration" seems to wear the poster crown. "Photomanipulations and starker designs don't seem to ignite the applause they once did back in the gig poster blow-up of the early [21st Century]," he says, adding that "overexposure of style and content" is part of the issue. Brogan thinks he's seen a general move towards "a more simple and graphic look lately, which I personally think is great. Not everything is moving that way, of course, which is good because variety and unique voices are extremely important, but I know that I have seen a lot more things done in that sort of retro graphic style in the last few years." He points to the newest Pepsi logo as an illustration of this style. "It's very simple and clean, when typically we're used to seeing fast food and junk food logos that have lots of gradients, shine marks, shadows, and that sort of thing. I think people are starting to realise again just how appealing a simple design can be when it's done well."

Ferguson thinks there's a harking back too, to "how posters used to be in the 70s/80s. Illustrated pieces of art rather than simple photomanipulations. This is because the current wave of designers/collectors grew up loving those kinds of posters and also the

## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA PAINTING

MATT FERGUSON EXPLAINS HOW HE ADAPTS HIS STYLE TO THE MOVIE PROJECT AT HAND

### 01 | DIFFERENT STROKES

"I don't really have a style," says Matt Ferguson. "I try to just do what feels right for each individual poster. So you will see fully illustrated posters or minimalist stuff from me depending on my own thoughts about the poster in question." Either way, the first step is to sketch out a rough comp to get a feel for placement.



### 02 | WATCH FILE SIZE

"Second I will block out shapes and colour to get a feel for how it will end up," says Ferguson. "When you are making a poster that is 24 x 36 and it needs to be at least 300dpi, the file is automatically already huge. Then factor in upwards of 1,000 layers for a really complicated design and I find I often crash my computer."

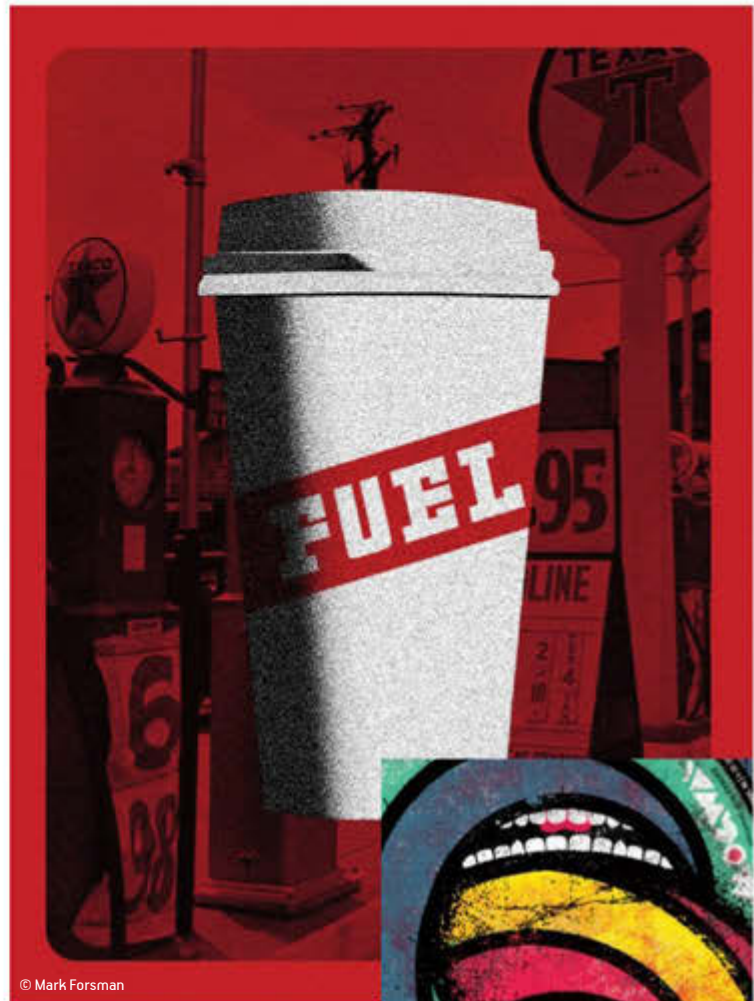


### 03 | PAINT AND POLISH

Finally it's a question of painting everything in proper detail and setting it up for screen print. "I exclusively use Photoshop and a tablet," says Ferguson. "I really just treat it like painting and do it pretty much all freehand."



© Matt Ferguson



© Mark Forsman

**Fuel:** "Start by sketching," advises Mark Forsman, "digitally or on paper, but start with a place for your mind to play, not a blank Photoshop canvas. You can solve a lot of the issues you'll run into with that simple first step of thinking everything through."



© Eric Nyffeler

**Mogwai:** "Composition as whole is a balancing act, where the slightest disproportion could throw the entire piece out of whack," says Eric Nyffeler

technology to do such art digitally has really come along. In the mid to late 90s people were seduced by the ease of doing things digitally, but the tools weren't really fully formed to actually make the posters better than traditional art."

Forsman thinks he sees too many minimalistic movie posters. "There are a few designers who do an incredible job, and the rest are really mediocre," he says. But he's more irritated by people who sell their work without obtaining the rights to use the movie's name, so he hopes "the future is one where everyone tries to create something new."

But whether a poster is celebrating a favourite film, promoting a new one, selling a product or shouting a slogan, there's one thing it certainly needs, and that's confidence. It's artwork that has to grab the viewer – their eyes won't alight on the wallflower poster – and once it's grabbed the attention, it needs to reel the viewer in. For Nyffeler, "A good poster is a merger of composition and content. Regardless of whether a poster contains photography, illustration, and/or/only typography, it will make an immediate first impression yet continue to reveal depth and content upon further scrutiny."



Bright Vivens

JUMP

DOZY FOWLS



Quack!

EST 2014



zzz...zz...

# CREATE CLASSIC TYPE

## LEARN HOW TO CREATE A RETRO CHALK TYPE EFFECT WITHOUT THE SKIN-CRAWLING SCRAPING

**A**s we free-fall mercilessly into the halfway point, the 2010s are fast becoming known as the decade when we all pretended to live in every other decade except for the one that we're actually in. From the 90s revival to mid-century-tinged typefaces that proliferate the internet, nostalgia is clearly the new black.

I've never believed in 'timeless design'; beautifully designed things are always called timeless at first and then people eventually tire of it and inevitably it falls out of fashion. 20 years later, in a reaction to the current trend and swept along by a wave of nostalgia,

it becomes fashionable again and everyone calls it timeless. It would seem, therefore, that the only way to be timeless is, in actual fact, to be time-specific.

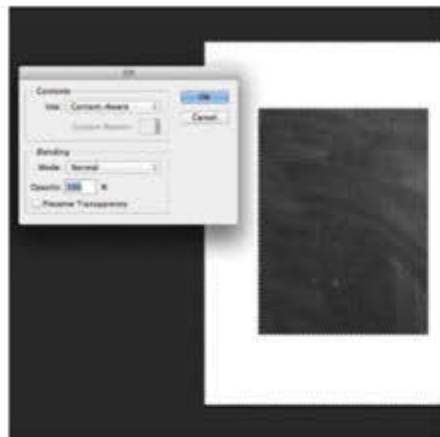
An example of this is chalk typography. Maligned for years as a style reserved for cheap public houses, chalk typography now appears on craft beer packaging and trendy burger joints. Whereas artists in the past had to suffer the excruciating scraping sound of the chalkboard (even writing about it makes my back teeth clench up), we can re-create this classic style in Photoshop. So before it falls out of fashion again, let's get started!

## BACKGROUND ELEMENTS

SET THE SCENE FOR YOUR IMAGE

### 01 CREATE THE BACKGROUND

Create the chalkboard background by dragging the chalkboard texture into the middle of the canvas. To fill in the empty areas, use the Magic Wand (W) to select the areas you want to fill and then select Content Aware Fill (Edit>Fill). Photoshop will magically fill in these areas using the current image.



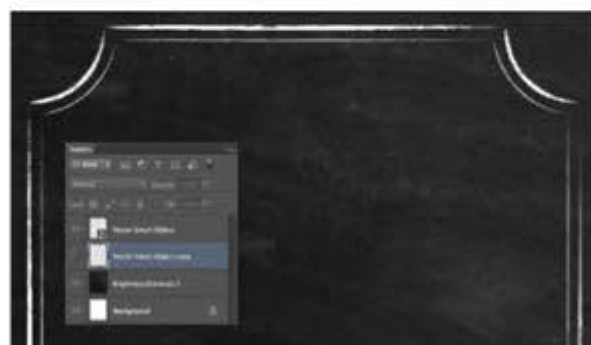
### 02 BACKGROUND ADJUSTMENTS

The Content-Aware Fill tool will normally create a fairly seamless fill. However, there may be areas that you'll need to tidy up by using the Clone Stamp tool (S). Hold Opt/Alt and click the left-hand mouse button to select the area that you want to clone and then left-click again over the area that you want to be hidden.



### 03 ADD A BORDER

Draw the outlines for each element in Adobe Illustrator or by hand and bring them into Photoshop separately so that you can adjust the composition of the piece and control the chalk effects one by one. Begin by bringing the border into the canvas. This should be a simple shape so that it doesn't draw too much attention.



#### OUR EXPERT

**ANDY HAU**  
www.andyhau.com  
@andykwhau

I am a London-based architect and designer and the owner of A.H.A Design. For me, design is an escape from the futility of modern life, not an endorsement of it.

#### SOURCE FILES

The files available on [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) include the blackboard background and a crumpled paper texture for the chalk effects. The fonts used are either standard stock fonts available on most computers or royalty-free fonts available from sites such as [www.dafont.com](http://www.dafont.com)

## WORK IN PROGRESS

### CREATE DIGITAL CHALK TYPOGRAPHY



Progress 1: Create the blackboard



Progress 2: Chalk effects

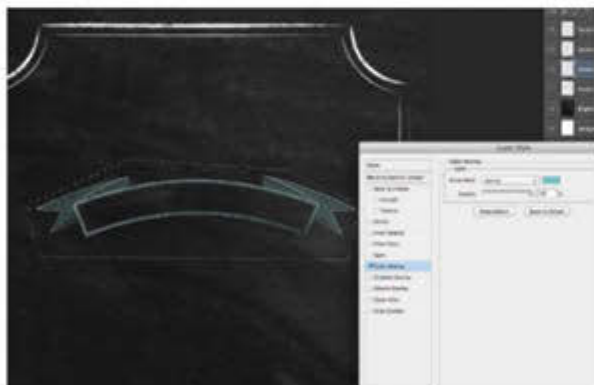


Progress 3: Finishing touches

Fonts: Nymphette.ttf ([www.dafont.com/nymphette.font](http://www.dafont.com/nymphette.font)); Lauren Thompson, Lobster 1.4.otf ([www.dafont.com/lobster.font](http://www.dafont.com/lobster.font)); Paolo Imballari Textures: Chalkboard.jpg ([www.flickr.com/photos/alicecp/13318243535/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/alicecp/13318243535/)); Alice Kreier, CrumpledPaper.jpg (<http://tinyurl.com/kf083v3>); John Ott

## 04 | DRAW THE FIRST BANNER

Flowing banners add dynamism and a sense of eccentricity to the image, which will not only help to make the image look more interesting but also more convincing. Select the areas of shading and highlights on the banner by using the Polygonal Lasso (L). Cut these areas out (Cmd/Ctrl+X) and paste (Cmd/Ctrl+V) them onto a new layer. Double-click the layer and select the Color Overlay tab. Choose a cool, receding turquoise colour (such as #71C5C5) to bring the banner to life.

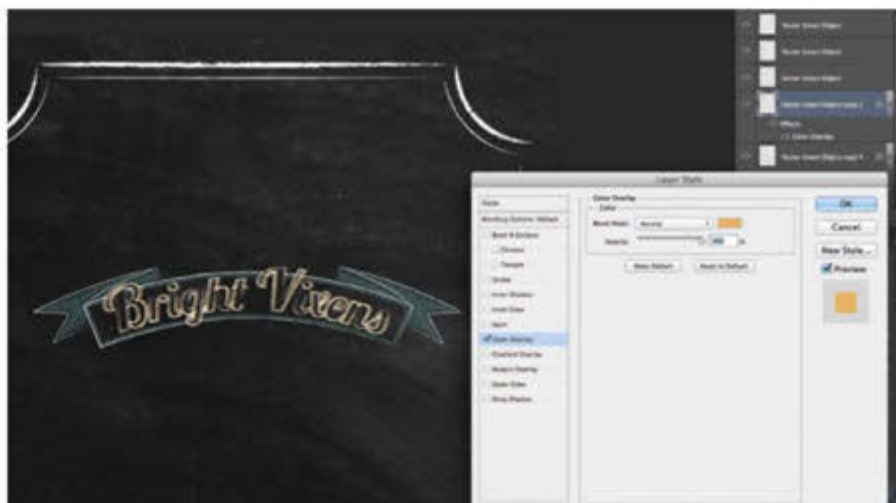


## 05 | ADD SOME TEXT

Since the banner is curved, a cursive font such as Lobster is required for the text to help with the flow of the image. You can construct the arched text using Adobe Illustrator's Type On A Path tool, or alternatively you may prefer to hand-draw it. Once you've brought the text into the canvas, use the Magic Wand (W) to select the spaces within the letters. Delete the areas of the banner that appear inside these letters.

## 06 | CREATE DEPTH

Adding depth to the letters will make them stand out more and make them more legible. Make a copy of the text layer and place it behind the existing text layer. Move the copied layer slightly to the right of the existing text to create some depth. Double-click on the layer and select the Color Overlay tab. Choose an advancing orangey-gold colour (such as #E7B566) to really highlight the text. Finally, select the spaces within the letters using the Magic Wand tool (W) to delete anything unnecessary.



## 07 | MORE TEXT

For the word 'JUMP', use a bold serif font to help embody and capture the meaning of the text. Arch the top of the text so that it slots seamlessly underneath the banner to create a more streamline appearance. This can be created in multiple ways: in Adobe Illustrator, you can use the Arc Upper Warp (Effect>Warp>Arc Upper); in Adobe Photoshop, you can use the Warp tool (Edit>Transform>Warp). Add lines inside the text to create a bevelled appearance, which will help to bring depth to the image.

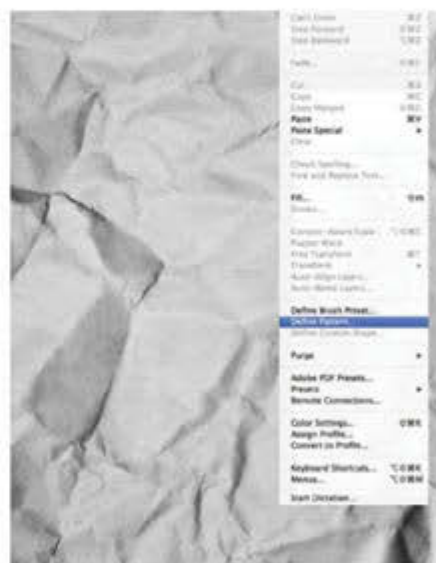


## 08 | DEFINE THE PATTERN

To create a chalk effect fill, open up the crumpled paper texture in a new window. Go to Edit>Define Pattern and give the pattern a name to save it. Go back to your working canvas and select all the bevelled segments in the 'JUMP' text that you want to be highlighted using the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) or Magic Wand tool (W). Create a new layer behind the 'JUMP' text layer and fill the boundaries in white using the Paint Bucket tool (G).

### ■ QUICK TIP

All outlines in this tutorial are created using the chalk brushes in Adobe Illustrator. Unless you have a graphics tablet and an endless supply of patience (I possess neither), I would not suggest trying to re-create the outlines in Photoshop – it will take a lot longer and you won't get a very convincing effect.



## ■ CHALK WITHOUT THE MESS

CREATE AN EASY BUT EFFECTIVE CHALK EFFECT

### 09 | FUSE FILLS

Once you have filled the boundaries in white, double-click on the layer and select Pattern Overlay. Select the crumpled paper pattern that you defined in step 8 and press OK. Ctrl/right-click on the layer and select Rasterize Layer Style. Go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise and change the Amount slider to approximately 35, or whatever you think is appropriate.



#### 001 | TEXT

The text was modified so that it fits comfortably under the curved banner, creating a more streamlined appearance

#### 002 | HIGHLIGHTS

A crumpled paper texture was defined as a pattern and then modified to create the fills for the highlights

#### 003 | ENHANCE

The white fills will be further modified to create a more convincing chalk effect using the Eraser (E)



### 11 | SECOND BANNER

Since the bottom edge of the 'JUMP' text is straight, the second banner needs to be more geometric. It is the tension between these straight edges and the organic nature of the cursive text and flourishes that will bring this image to life. For the 'Dozy Fowls' text, choose a bold serif font such as Copperplate to match the linearity of the banner. Give the text a black outline by double-clicking the layer and selecting Stroke. Finally, give the text some depth by following step 6.



### 12 | THIRD BANNER

For the third banner, a more organic and laid-back approach is required in order to complement the first banner and contrast with the second, thereby creating a complete composition. Much like step 4, select the drape lines on the banner by using the Polygonal Lasso (L). Cut these lines out and paste them onto a new layer. Double-click on the layer and select the Color Overlay tab. Select the orangey-gold colour for these lines to help bring depth to the banner.



### 10 | ENHANCE THE FILLS

Turn down the Opacity of the layer with all of the fills to help blend them into the chalkboard background. Select the Eraser tool (E) and choose the Spatter Brush in the brush settings, changing the size of the brush to suit the size of the fills (approximately 150px). Lower the Opacity and Flow settings for the Eraser to approximately 25% and 35% respectively, then gently delete some of the fills to create an uneven and smudged chalk effect. Lower the Opacity of the layer further if necessary.

“It would seem that the only way to be timeless is to be time-specific”



### 13 | QUACK!

Again, to express the meaning and humour behind the text, a cursive font such as Lobster is required for the word 'QUACK'. To make the text as bold and loud as possible, fill it in with a chalk fill effect using the process described in steps 9 and 10. For depth, copy the layer and place it behind the 'QUACK!' text layer. Double-click on the copied layer and apply a Stroke layer style in gold and a Color Overlay in black.

## DRAWN TOGETHER

BRING TOGETHER THE FINISHING TOUCHES

### 14 DRAW BOWS

For a bit of quirkiness, create two bows to support the third banner. Create the chalk fills in a similar way to steps 9 and 10. However, once you've got the chalk effect the way you want it, create a new Photo Filter adjustment layer by clicking on the round icon in the Layers panel. Place the adjustment layer directly above the layer with the bows, Ctrl/ right-click on it and select Create Clipping Mask. Fill the adjustment layer with the turquoise colour to change the colour of the chalk fill.



### 17 DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT

Much like the crown, a date of establishment often makes the brain believe something is older than it actually is at first glance. Use a bold serif font such as Copperplate to create the date using the Text tool (T). It doesn't really matter what date you put in – I've used 2014 mainly because I like the feeling of anachronism and absurdity, but if you really want to trick the viewer, use an older date. Lower the opacity of this layer slightly to help it blend into the blackboard.



#### CLARITY VERSUS FEELING

When it comes to typography, there is always a battle between the clarity of the text versus the overall feeling you want to convey. In chalk typography, unless you are using it to sell a product, the legibility of the text almost comes second to the emotion you are evoking. Chalk typography is graceful, dynamic and intricate, which should be celebrated and not apologetically leashed. Of course, make sure that your text is legible at closer inspection, but at first glance, the viewer should be bowled over by power of the flowing text, not necessarily the meaning behind it.

### 15 SLEEPING DUCKS AND JUMPING FOXES

Introducing small illustrations will help to add to the illusion that this piece has been created using real chalk. Use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) to create silhouettes of a jumping fox and a sleeping duck and follow steps 9 and 10 to create the chalk effect. For the purposes of association, place the fox above 'Bright Vixens' and the duck below 'QUACK!'. For the duck, add some 'Zzz..zzz' using the Type tool (T) to indicate he is sleeping. Manipulate the 'Zzz..zzz' using the Warp function (Edit>Transform>Warp).



### 16 CREATE A CROWN

Using chalk brushes and effects is not enough to fool the viewer into believing that this image has been created in chalk. The viewer also needs to be bombarded with subtle mental association triggers in order to trick the brain. People often associate the idea of monarchy with history, and so by placing a silhouette of a crown at the top, it automatically makes the image 'feel' older than it is. Create the crown as per step 15 and change the colour of the chalk by following step 14.



### 18 LARGE FOX

One of the great things about classic chalk typography is that the more you look at it, the more it reveals. While the words are no doubt the star of the image, create some secondary interest by placing a large fox in the bottom right of the image. Make sure that the lines are free flowing and that they do not connect; the rougher you make the lines, the more convincing they will appear. Change the highlights to an orangey-gold colour by following step 12.

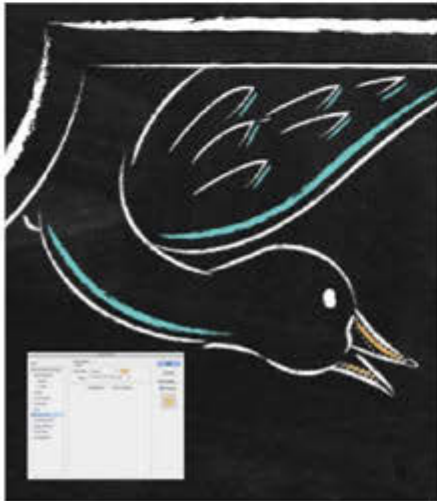


#### QUICK TIP

Classic chalk typography is typically monochromatic. The problem with this is that it can often end up feeling a little flat. By introducing a receding colour (such as blue) and an advancing colour (such as orange), you will add depth, making the image will feel more dynamic and spritely.

**19 | LARGE DUCK**

To balance out the large fox in the bottom right-hand corner, create a large duck in the top left hand corner. Much like the fox, keep the lines as flowing and sinuous as possible to create a feeling of movement. This will help to guide the viewer where to look and where to start reading. Use highlights near the edges to give dimensionality to the duck. Change the colour of the highlights to the turquoise colour by following step 12.

**22 | BLUE FLOURISHES**

To add depth, some of the swirls need to be strategically changed to a receding turquoise colour. In a balanced manner, use the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) to select swirls across the composition that you feel need to be toned down. Cut and paste these swirls onto a new layer and change the colour by double-clicking on the layer and selecting Color Overlay. Make sure these swirls are equally spaced out to avoid creating large areas of receding colour, which will make the composition seem 'hollow'.

**■ QUICK TIP**

Whilst it's important to make sure that the composition of your text is well constructed, spending too much time aligning everything will make this type of typography seem stiff and unconvincing. Instead of fretting about how it all lines up, embrace your inner slob and go with what feels right!

**20 | ADD FLOURISHES**

Swirls and flourishes not only add drama to the image but also help to direct the eye to other parts of the composition. You can create these flourishes by hand or in Adobe Illustrator. However, the easiest and most effective way is to use a font called Nymphette, which includes a series of beautiful swirls and flourishes. Position and size the swirls so that they flow effortlessly from and to each other, making sure that the gaps in between are approximately equally spaced.

**23 | EXPLOSION LINES**

Finally, to turn the feeling of dynamism up to full volume, add explosion lines that lead from the centre of the image to the inside edge of the border. This technique will help to fill in some of the empty spaces in the composition and gives the image maximum impact. Make sure you break the lines with the Eraser (E) at the points where the exploding lines intersect with the banners, text and swirls. This will help to frame these elements and maintain their legibility.

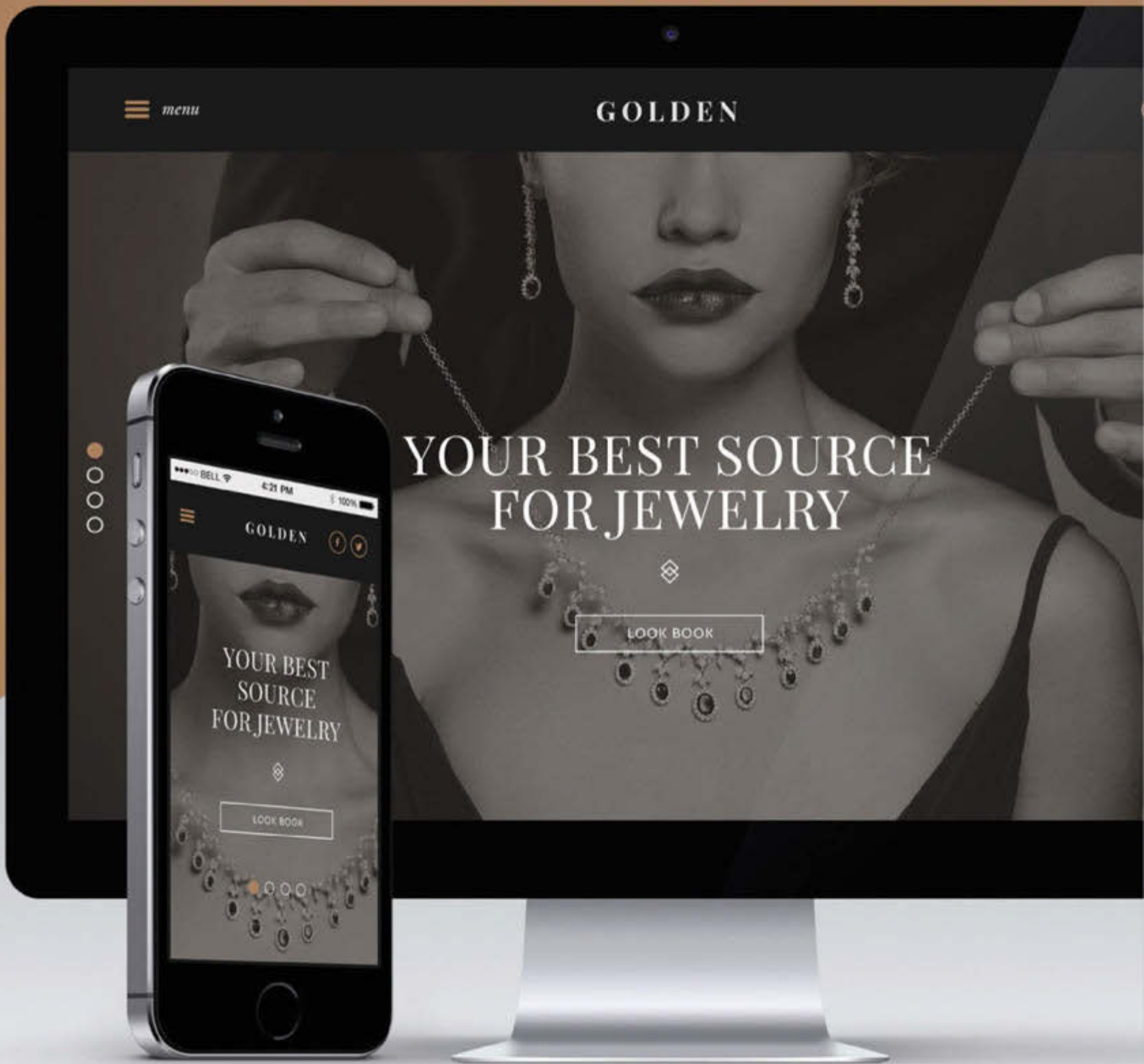
**21 | GOLD FLOURISHES**

Changing the colour of the top and bottom swirls will help to 'contain' the text and make them the focus. If you've used the Nymphette font to create the swirls, make sure you rasterise the layer first by Ctrl/right-clicking on the layer and clicking Rasterize Layer. Select the swirls at the top and bottom of the composition using the Polygonal Lasso tool (L) and cut and paste them onto a new layer. Change these swirls to a gold colour by double-clicking on the layer and selecting Color Overlay.

**24 | ZOOM OUT**

Zoom out using Cmd/Ctrl+0 so that the entire image fits onto your screen. Check that you are happy with the composition of the image. The position of all the objects should appear balanced and there should be a natural 'flow' that leads the eye from the start of the sentence to the end and then to the other parts of the image. Make sure that the areas of colour are balanced and help with the flow of the composition rather than detract from it.





# MASTER RESPONSIVE DESIGN

## CREATE A RESPONSIVE FRONT PAGE WITH PRESENTATION MATERIAL

As well as having to design for desktop, tablet and smartphone, and deciding whether to use fluid or non-fluid content grids, responsive design bears yet another challenge: making sure all your assets look sharp on HD screens. If it were only @2x, this would be rather easy. But with the dozens of sizes and resolution types that Android devices bring with them – sometimes as high as @4x – things get more complex. This tutorial will focus on how to design a responsive website, and how to easily prepare it for client presentations along the way. We will be looking into everything from setting up the ideal

Photoshop document as a template to work from, to working with grids, guidelines and vector Smart Objects, which allow you to create SVG files for your final website that can be animated on rollover and work perfectly on Retina screens.

While most graphic assets like images will still look acceptable when scaled a tad up or down, it's not as easy when it comes to icons. There's a simple reason for that: icons are usually much more filigree and detailed than most other image assets. Thin outlines especially don't scale well. There are two great solutions that are lightweight and incredibly easy to implement and use: SVG sprites or icon fonts.

## GETTING STARTED

PREPARE THE DOCUMENT AND CREATE THE GRAPHICS

### 01 SET UP THE DOCUMENT

Start by designing in 1600px in width, with a safe zone of 1000px in height. Then you know anything within the 1600 x 1000px will be available at the desktop version of the site. And it's easy to prepare the presentation in monitor screens later, as the ratio also works in an image of a cinema screen that is 1440 x 900px.



### 03 START FROM THE TOP

Start out by doing the navigation. Just get an icon next to text and see how it looks with the chosen colours. I chose a margin of 75px from the edge. Create basic icons, like the menu icon, straight in Photoshop. You can then re-create them later in Illustrator just to make sure you have it in vector for SVG output later.

### 02 PICK COLOURS AND THINK MOBILE

The first thing to do after setting up the document is to add three guidelines: one that defines the centre of the document and two more that define the 640px mobile height. You can also search for images to base your colour inspiration on, which can be taken from the product trends and similar.



“With the dozens of sizes and resolution types that Android devices bring with them – sometimes as high as @4x – things can get complex”



### OUR EXPERT

**ROLF A. JENSEN**  
www.portfolio.works  
@rolfajensen

Rolf A. Jensen is an international award-winning Norwegian art director, designer and co-founder of Good Morning, an interactive design agency. In a career spanning over a decade, he's worked with clients such as DreamWorks, Electronic Arts, Warner Bros, Ford, Sony and Toyota.

### SOURCE FILES

Included on [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) is the final Photoshop file of the web design as well as presentation and vector resources. The main image is available at [www.thinkstockphotos.com/image/stock-photo-sensual-couple/184738880](http://www.thinkstockphotos.com/image/stock-photo-sensual-couple/184738880).

## WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM RAW TO RESPONSIVE



Progress 1: Create the SVG-ready icons



Progress 2: Add the graphics



Progress 3: Prepare for mobile



## 04 MAKE THE SVG-READY ICONS

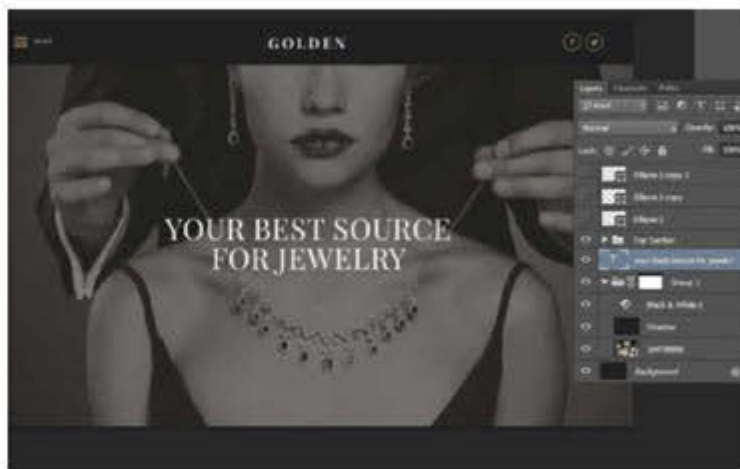
For the social icons, make one 36 x 36px in Illustrator and use that as a template for the rest of the icons. After pasting it into Photoshop, click on it and select 'New Smart Object Via Copy'. This will avoid conflict between the icons you copy and reuse on your website, as if you were to make an adjustment to one of them, it would apply to all icons you've copied. Social icons can be found on FileSilo.

## 06 SVG-READY WEB GRAPHICS

Create a new document in Illustrator. Set the values to 36 x 36px. Now click the Round Rectangle tool and drag a line 25px in width and 2.5px in height, duplicate it three times and rotate the lines 45 degrees to create a diamond square. Duplicate this and move it up as seen on the image, then select the two diamonds with the Selection tool, change the colour to white and copy and paste it into your Photoshop document. Place the graphic in the centre underneath your title treatment.

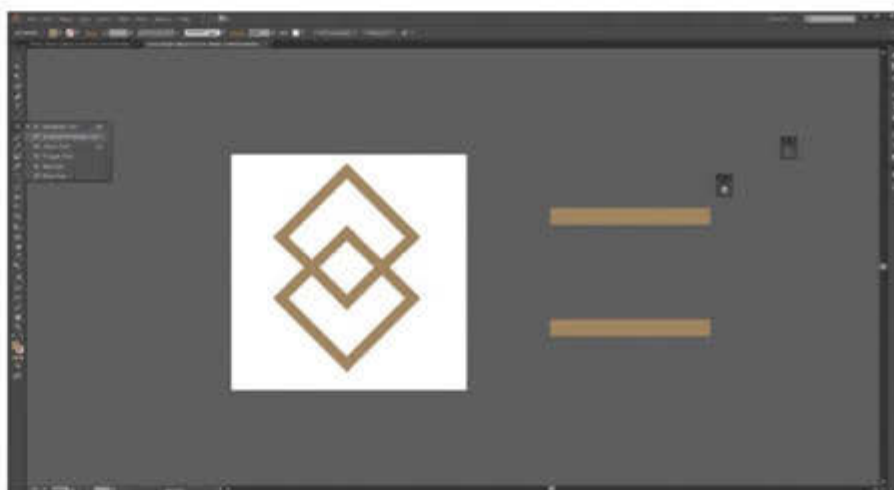
## 07 BUTTON ROLLOVER

In Photoshop, use the Rectangle tool and drag to make a bronze shape 250 x 50px. Choose a font with less detail for the smaller text and buttons. I've used Cabin from Google Web fonts – it's also included on FileSilo. After placing the text in the centre of the shape you just created, make sure the size of the text is 18pt and set to regular. Now you've just created your 'rollover' for the button, as you will do the buttons in the same style as the 2pt circles you have around your social icons and the 2pt diamond graphics.



## 05 IMAGERY AND STATEMENT

Tone down the image by creating a new layer on top and fill it with colour #202020. Set the Opacity to 50%. Add a Black & White adjustment layer and boost the Exposure to give the image a traditional fashion look. As a last touch, add the colour on top of the layers. Make sure it's above the Black & White layer, otherwise the colour won't be visible. Hit [G] and fill the layer with bronze (#ad825d). Select Color blending mode and set the Opacity to 10%.

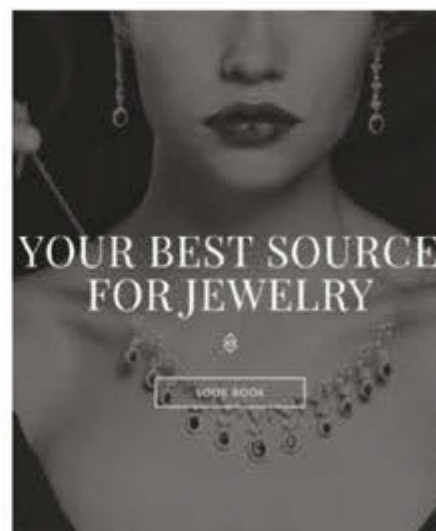


## 08 BUTTON TEMPLATE

After you've created the rollover state for your button, it's easy to make the normal state, since this is going to be an outline that gets filled in on rollover. Simply make two new rectangle shapes, which are 2px in height and 250px wide (the button's width). Do the same with two new shapes that are 50px in height and 2px in width to create the vertical sides for the button. If you are using Photoshop CC, you can simply select all four rectangle shape layers and merge them into one shape.

### QUICK TIP

Double-click on your Vector Smart Object while in Photoshop and it will open in Illustrator, then click File>Save As and choose SVG from the file options. You will have exported a perfectly scalable web icon.

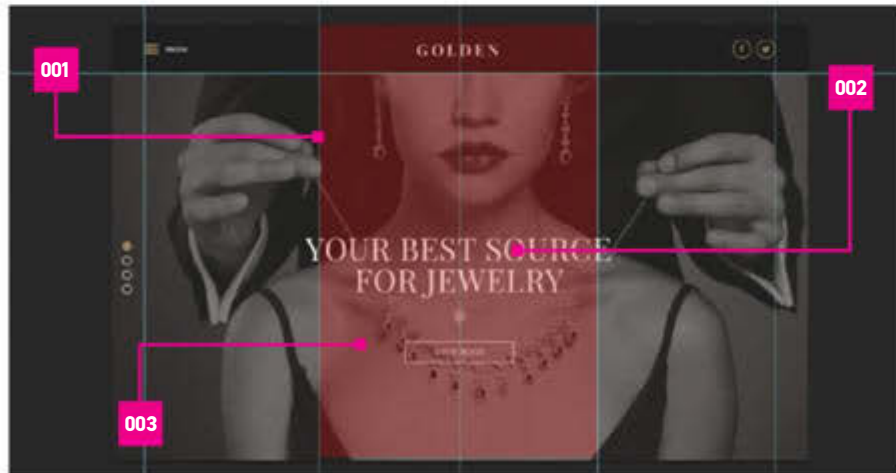


## REDESIGN FOR MOBILE

ADJUST THE SIZE AND POSITIONING OF ELEMENTS FOR MOBILE DEVICES

### 09 FINISHING DESKTOP

Now let's finish up on the desktop design. Add a few more details like the slide options on the left side that indicates that the imagery in the background can be interactive in some way. Then take a look at the mobile safe-zone, marked red on the picture. You now need to make sure all of your elements can scale and work down to that space. It's a simple matter of re-organising your elements so they fit within the safe zone, with some space on the sides.



**001 | HELPING HAND**  
Set up an on-screen grid and use existing industry imagery for inspiration and colour reference

**002 | WORKING WITH FONTS**  
Research typography and place in a nice header text to make a bold statement in the centre of the design

**003 | PREPARING FOR MOBILE**  
Reorganise the elements from your desktop design into their own folder so it fits on a mobile screen



### 11 CREATE THE MOCK-UP FOR MOBILE

After you have re-organised the folder and layers, it's time to re-organise the position and sizes. A few key rules are to scale all your icons to about 30 per cent of what they were on desktop. If your icons are already small in the desktop design, you might want to double that scale. Another tip is to never use a text size less than 24pt – it's just going to be hard to read on a mobile screen. Place a new layer on top of your mobile folder and create two black shapes to the sides of the workspace so you have all your focus on the centre part where the mobile design will be. Make a new margin from the edge of the design at 30px on both sides to keep some space between your elements and the edge of the screen.



### 12 PREPARE FOR PRESENTATION

It's always great to show your client how the design will look in a browser, to give them the picture of how things will be aligned and scaled on a computer screen and a mobile screen. On FileSilo you can find some pre-made assets of an iMac screen and an iPhone. These are great tools to help sell your design and create a better awareness on the client's side of how the final outcome will look and feel.

### 10 PREPARE THE PSD FILE FOR MOBILE DESIGN

Make two new folders on top of all your layers (click on the folder icon at the bottom of your Layers panel or hit Cmd/Ctrl+G). Name them 'Desktop' and 'Mobile'. After that, copy all your current layers into the desktop folder, and copy all the layers a second time into your mobile folder. Do this by Shift-selecting all the layers (besides the two recently created folders called Desktop and Mobile), and drag all the layers into the folder while holding Opt/Alt down on your keyboard.



“It's always great to show your client how the design will look in a browser, to give them the picture of how things will be aligned and scaled”

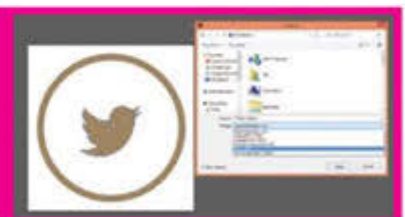


### 13 WORKING WITH THE DEVICE TEMPLATES

Open up 'iMac\_screen.psd' from the assets, double-click the layer called 'Put your design here', then open up your PSD file with the web design. Go to Image>Image Size and scale it down to 1440 x 900px, then with the mobile folder off, merge the desktop folder with all the layers and drag it over to the Smart Object called 'Screen\_11' that you opened from 'iMac\_screen.psd'. Now make sure it's centred and save it. Repeat the same steps for the 'iPhone\_screen.psd' to get the phone screen.

#### ICON FONTS VS SVGs

There aren't fundamental differences between the two when you just want to display a couple of resolution-independent monotone icons on your site. Of the two, icon fonts have greater support of out-of-date software, so if you're working on a larger scale project that is expected to get great traffic from less techy audiences, you might want to go with icon fonts. If, however, you want to use the power of recent browsers and mobile OSs, then SVGs are for you. While creating icon fonts is a bit of setup work and you'll probably look into a proper software tool that'll help you do it, SVGs don't require anything. Simply export to the format from Illustrator and your job is done.





# WILD ENGLAND

via

## Richard Jefferies' AFTER LONDON

PUBLISHED BY ADVANCED PHOTOSHOP MAGAZINE IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE FANTASTICAL LITERATURE TRAVEL AGENCY

# DESIGN A VINTAGE-STYLE TRAVEL POSTER

CREATE A COLOURFUL RETRO TRAVEL POSTER INSPIRED BY AUTUN PURSER'S FANTASTIC TRAVEL DESTINATIONS SERIES

**T**ravel posters have long been used to advertise the delights of distant lands and cities. In the 1940s and 50s, British travel poster design reached its zenith, with the iconic rail and London Transport posters exhorting customers to leave the cities at weekends to enjoy the countryside.

Photoshop is an ideal application for the design of such retro posters. The ability to work up individual elements in isolation, then import and reposition as distinct layers within a composition, makes the fine-tuning of a final image more straightforward than it was for pioneer travel poster artists. Historically, printing technology was partly

responsible for the limited colour palettes employed by many poster artists. This limitation meant that trying to replicate the natural colours of a location was not possible, and that bright, high-contrast colours were often used to depict a scene instead. By setting up Photoshop colour swatches, this approach to colouration can be reproduced.

In this tutorial you will design a poster advertising 'Wild England', an imaginary England introduced in the 1885 novel *After London* by Richard Jefferies. You will learn how to produce block colour elements from sketches and integrate these with text and textures within the Photoshop environment to create effective retro posters.

## ■ DETERMINE LAYOUT AND REQUIRED ELEMENTS

SKETCH A ROUGH POSTER OUTLINE AND BUILD ELEMENTS

### 01 | ROUGH LAYOUT SKETCH

You will produce a bold, block-colour travel poster from a number of design elements. You will base your poster on those produced in the 1950s by London Transport. An online archive of these posters is available at [www.ltmcollection.org](http://www.ltmcollection.org). The first stage in designing such a poster is to draw a rough layout sketch from which to work (provided in the source files – 'roughlayouts sketch.psd').



### 03 | SKETCH OR TRACE ELEMENT OUTLINES

The elements that make up the poster will be block colour components with a black outline. Depending on your confidence with traditional pen and ink sketching or your access to a stylus/graphics pad, you can either sketch out on paper the element outlines for scanning (step 4), or alternatively load the source photos into Photoshop and produce the outlines there (step 5).

### 02 | COLLECT SOURCE PHOTOGRAPHS

Although you are producing a stylised block-colour travel poster for a location from fiction, it is preferable wherever possible to work from life or photographs. In the source files, photographs are provided that were taken specifically based on the rough layout presented in step 1, ('referencephotos' folder). Websites such as [www.deviantart.com](http://www.deviantart.com) are also useful sources of source material.



#### OUR EXPERT

**AUTUN PURSER**  
[www.apillustration.co.uk](http://www.apillustration.co.uk)  
[@apillustration](https://twitter.com/apillustration)

Autun Purser is a freelance graphic designer best known for his range of colourful travel posters, advertising the delights of locations from fantasy and science-fiction novels.

#### SOURCE FILES

All design elements used in the poster are available for free download via [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609), as black and white and coloured elements. Also provided are the source photographs used in designing these.

## ■ WORK IN PROGRESS FROM SKETCH TO POSTER



Progress 1: Rough layout sketch



Progress 2: Colour and import foreground layers



Progress 3: Close-up inspection



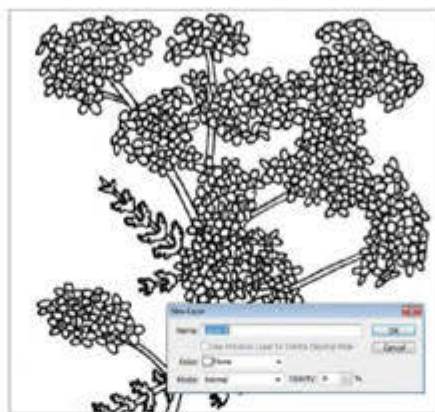
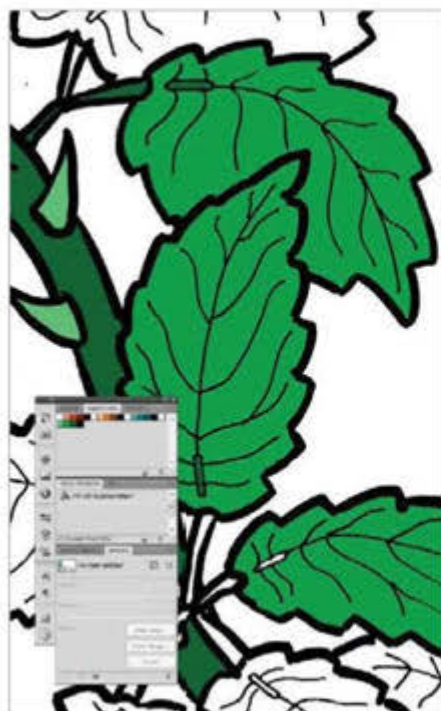
**04 | SKETCHING AND SCANNING ELEMENT OUTLINES**  
The rough layout in step 1 shows the River Thames surrounded by encroaching vegetation, as described in the source novel. Each of the various elements in the design can be drawn separately with pen and ink directly onto paper then scanned into Photoshop. Try to divide the elements into discrete areas that may be colour-filled with the Paint Bucket tool later in the tutorial. When scanning, scan as black and white images, with no greyscale. This ensures striking element outlines.

**05 | CREATE ELEMENT OUTLINES WITHIN PHOTOSHOP**  
If you prefer, you may create the black and white outlines of the image elements within Photoshop. Load the source photos into Photoshop (from File>Open>'referencephotos' or internet search) then create a new layer (Layer>New>Layer). On this new layer, trace directly around the feature of interest with the Pencil tool – a stylus or graphics pad may be preferred. Try to leave no gaps in an element outline, so the regions of the element can be filled with the Paint Bucket tool later in the tutorial. When the outline is drawn, delete the source image layer and save.

**06 | SET UP SWATCH**  
Commonly, retro travel posters use a limited colour palette to unify design and make it more eye-catching. At this stage you need to think of a colour scheme and set up a swatch to keep organised. Wherever possible, colours from this swatch should be used, particularly for large poster elements. To add to the swatch palette, select a foreground colour (using either Color Picker or Eyedropper) and select New Swatch (Swatches>New Swatch). A swatch set may be loaded from the source files ('retroposter.aso').

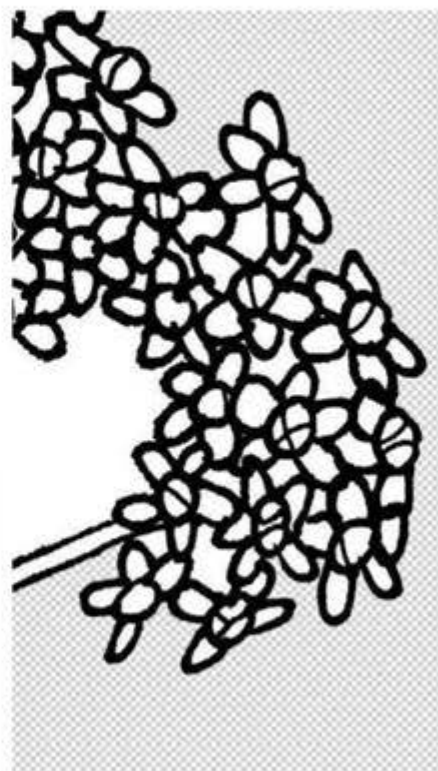
**07 | CUT ELEMENT OUTLINES FROM SCANS**  
After scanning the sketches of the various poster elements as black and white files, these sketches need to be cropped to size and copied into a new CMYK file so they may be coloured. At this stage, it is important to ensure that areas of white in an image can be removed, to allow the element to be layered into the main poster design. To do this, double-click on the Background layer in the new CMYK image and set Opacity to 0%. Then save the image as a PSD file.

**08 | REFINE ELEMENT OUTLINES**  
The next step is to make sure that areas of each element can be later filled with the Paint Bucket tool, and that all areas of white are removed from the element. First, zoom in on the image and inspect it for gaps in the black outline. If any gaps are present, use the Pencil tool and a black foreground colour to correct this. Next, use the Magic Wand tool to select areas of the image that will not contain colour (ie between the stems of plants) and delete these.



**QUICK TIP**

When designing individual elements for retro posters, it is important to not be overly concerned with achieving photorealism. Complex subjects such as overgrown tree trunks should be simplified where possible, with simple repetitious geometric shapes used to illustrate ivy for example, and just a few lines used to indicate bark texture.

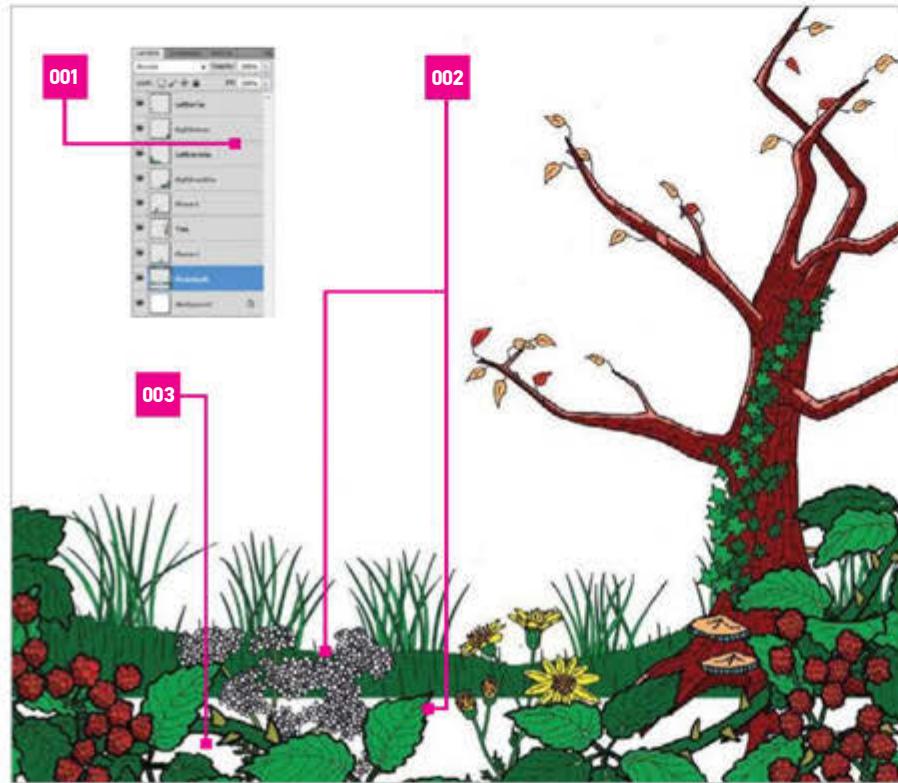


## COLOUR AND ALIGN ELEMENTS

COLOUR COMPONENTS AND ARRANGE DESIGN ELEMENTS

### 09 COLOUR AND IMPORT FOREGROUND LAYERS

It is time to colour each foreground element file in individually and then save as coloured versions (if you prefer, use those already coloured in the source files – File>Open>'colouredcomponents'>'foreground\_elements'). Open each file in turn and fill in block colour using the Paint Bucket. Select Contiguous and set Tolerance to 0 in the toolbar. Copy each element onto the 'element\_baselayer.psd' stack and reposition.



**001 | LAYOUT ORDER**  
The most logical way to order layers is to place the most distant from the viewer at the top

**002 | LINE THICKNESS**  
When producing the design element sketches, consider where the element will be positioned. Use a thicker pen for foreground features

**003 | UNFILLED SPACE**  
Design elements may not cover the foreground region fully. Insert a new layer and use the Paint Bucket to fill these



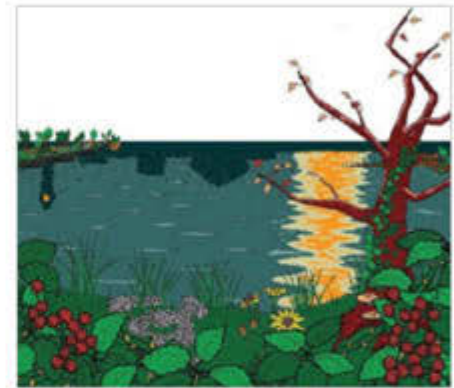
### 11 ALIGN BACKGROUND FEATURES

After colouring the elements making up the background section of the design, they must be opened into the layer stack and positioned (or use those provided; File>Open>'colouredcomponents'>'background\_elements'). In some cases, these background layers will be above middle-ground layers, for example the reed layers. Given that these background elements are rather small, if the black element outline regime is maintained in this area of the image, a difficult mass of lines would result. Replace the black lines with colours from the swatch selection. Move the 'skyline' layer and middle section 'Thames' into alignment.



### 12 SET BACKGROUND COLOUR AND ADD FEATURES

The main design is near completion. With the moon full and low in the sky, an evening or dawn sky colouration is desired. Select the Background layer and fill with an appropriate colour using the Paint Bucket tool. Following this, further design elements can be added to the image, such as those provided (File>Open>'colouredcomponents'>'additional\_elements'). These images may require resizing depending on where they will be placed. Try to avoid an overly busy design; retro travel posters are often minimal in layout with large, very uniform regions as well as detailed areas.



### 10 THE MIDDLE REGION

After colouring the middle region design elements, bring these into the layout as layers (or use those provided; File>Open>'colouredcomponents'>'middleground\_elements'). These layers should be positioned below the foreground layers. For now there is no requirement to position the design elements in exactly the final positions; each layer can be removed or moved as required throughout the design process.

“ Try to avoid an overly busy design; retro travel posters are often minimal in layout ”



### 13 INSERT SHADOWS

Some of the elements included shaded sections. Others, such as the bridge across the river and the small island, did not. These should be manually added by zooming in on the area and carefully outlining a shadowed region in an appropriate colour with the Pencil tool. When doing this, consider the relative position of the moon (the most significant source of light in the image). Place the shadows directly on the layer casting the shadow or on the layer underneath, whichever is most appropriate.

## FROM ILLUSTRATION TO POSTER

INTEGRATING THE TEXT INTO THE DESIGN

### 14 ADD STARS OR OTHER AERIAL FEATURES

The sky can be made livelier with the depiction of flying animals, clouds or a few stars. If clouds are to be used, they must appear to float and not sit as solid, lumpy expanses of colour. A simple technique to add stars is to set the Pencil tool to a particular thickness and place dots of appropriate colour directly onto the Background layer. Stars should increase in number vertically from the horizon and also with distance from the moon. This will also help guide the eye around the design.



### 16 IMPORT ART ONTO BACKGROUND

After checking for any errors in the art, it is time to import the full design onto the poster. For the artwork here, you should set up a new CMYK file of 600 dpi and a size of Width 13800 x Height 18600 pixels. After doing this, select the full art layer from the file you have been working on and go to File>Copy Merged to grab all the layers. Paste this into the new file and position the image so that the top and side margins are equal. Text will be inserted at the bottom of the image.

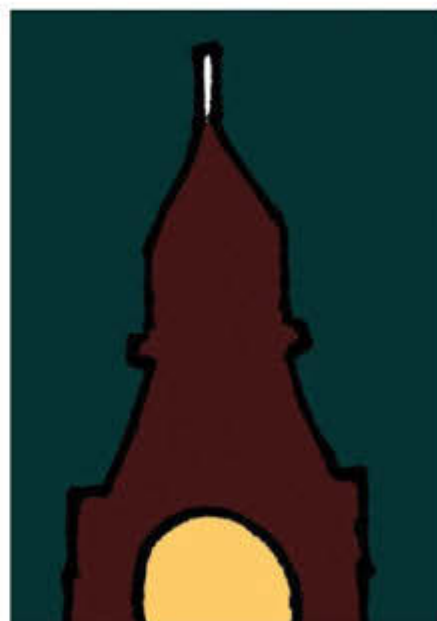


### LINE THICKNESS AND COLOUR

When sketching and scanning the artwork for the elements for retro travel posters, it is important to aim at using just a few distinct line thicknesses in the final image. If you sketch and scan at a range of resolutions and sizes, the result within the final design is not cohesive. Thicker foreground lines can aid in creating depth. Line colour can also be changed (try filling black outlines with the Paint Bucket tool). Here the black dog outline is replaced by dark blue so features can be picked out. The reflections in the water are outlined in white, indicating brightness.

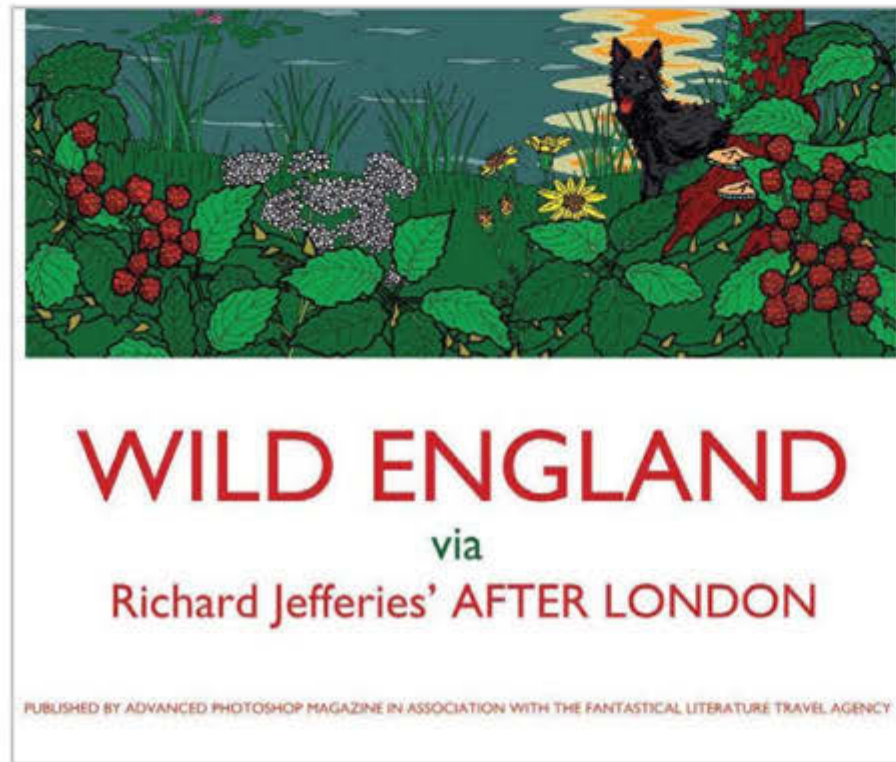
### 15 CLOSE-UP INSPECTION

The poster art is now near completion. Commonly when working with so many individual design elements, small areas of white background may remain or imperfections in the original scanning might litter the image. These now need to be deleted or replaced with the correct colours. To do this, zoom in to 100% scale and scan across the whole design, fixing any problems you may find with the Paint Bucket, Pencil or Magic Wand tools.



## 17 | ADDING TEXT

A few lines of minimal text are common on retro travel posters. Usually one or two fonts are used, perhaps with several changes in font size. Use bright, bold text to advertise the location, with smaller text making some description of the place, or making some sort of joke – ‘Skegness, it’s so bracing’ is a famous example. Here the Gill Sans font is used, heavily employed in the mid-20th Century. A free version by Jonathan Paterson is available here: <http://www.fontspace.com/jonathan-paterson/london-tube>. After adding text, look again at design and make any further touch-ups.



### ■ QUICK TIP

The purpose of a travel poster is to grab the attention of a possibly busy commuter or someone flicking through a magazine, and transmit a short burst of information swiftly. Text should be minimal and the design should clearly show what is on offer. Here, it's an area of wild countryside, a common motif in vintage London Transport posters.

## 18 | AGE THE PAPER

The design is finished, but to give the design a more retro look you can now age the paper. Download a paper texture from the internet ('Paper\_texture\_v5' from [bashcorpo.deviantart.com](http://bashcorpo.deviantart.com) used here). Resize this to match the poster size and import as the top layer in your poster stack. Next, Ctrl/right-click on the layer and select Blending Options. Experiment with blend modes and opacities – Multiply is often satisfactory; here Linear Burn is used. Any unwanted texture areas can be selected with the Marquee tool and Edit>Fill with Content-Aware and 100% Opacity selected.





# CREATE ADVANCED TYPE WITH PHOTOSHOP

COMBINE ILLUSTRATOR WITH PHOTOSHOP TO CREATE A NIGHT-SKY LETTERING SCENE

**T**eam up the power of Adobe Illustrator with Photoshop's superior finishing tools to create a lettering illustration of stars in a night sky. Illustrator's easy-to-use brushes and Photoshop's ability to successfully replicate the effects of lighting and distortion make these two programs an unbeatable combo for achieving these effects quickly and effectively. No additional plug-ins, tools or software will be necessary in order to follow this tutorial.

There is an assumption of a basic level of knowledge with both software packages to carry out

the necessary processes involved. Although the tutorial uses a custom script-based lettering arrangement, the effects outlined can be achieved from any style of lettering or vector-based shape in the sky. All that is required is a vector path for the stars to be scattered along. The elements contained within this illustration are constructed across three key stages; namely the creation of the type, the background (consisting of the sky, other stars and landscape on the horizon), and the foreground (consisting of a reflected version of the prior two stages to give the impression of a body of water).

## ■ LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

DRAW A ROUGH SKETCH AND CREATE YOUR STAR BRUSH

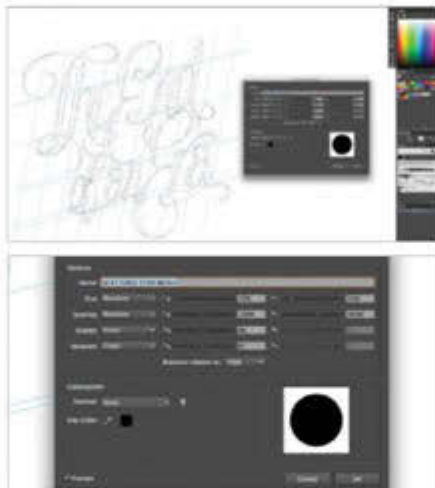
### 01 | SKETCH YOUR LETTERING

Start your lettering as a rough sketch to resolve your composition and then scan and bring into Illustrator for vectorising. Draw guides to help keep the momentum and proportions of your lettering consistent. Then, using your Pen tool, digitise your type. Once you're happy with the form of your type, apply a 1 point stroke to create an outline.



### 02 | CREATE A SCATTER BRUSH

Create the scattered star brush by selecting the Ellipse tool and clicking on the canvas to bring up the Ellipse dialog box. Create an ellipse that is 4.2mm in diameter and drag and drop the shape into your Brushes palette window. When presented with the New Brush dialog box, select Scatter Brush.



### 03 | ADJUST BRUSH SETTINGS AND APPLY

Under the Scatter Brush settings, set the Size and Spacing to Random. For Size, set the Minimum Range slider to 10% and the Maximum to 35%. For Spacing, set the Minimum Range slider to 100% and the Maximum to 300%. Next, select OK and apply the Scatter Brush to your lettering.



#### OUR EXPERT

**LUKE LUCAS**

[www.lukelucas.com](http://www.lukelucas.com)

Luke Lucas is an award-winning freelance creative from Sydney, Australia. Magazines and advertising agencies from around the world commission him for his skill in custom illustrative lettering and typography design.

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#### SOURCE FILES

Included on [FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609](http://FileSilo.co.uk/bks-609) is the layered PSD, the AI file of the star field and the displacement map.

## ■ WORK IN PROGRESS

FROM SKETCH TO FINISHED ARTWORK



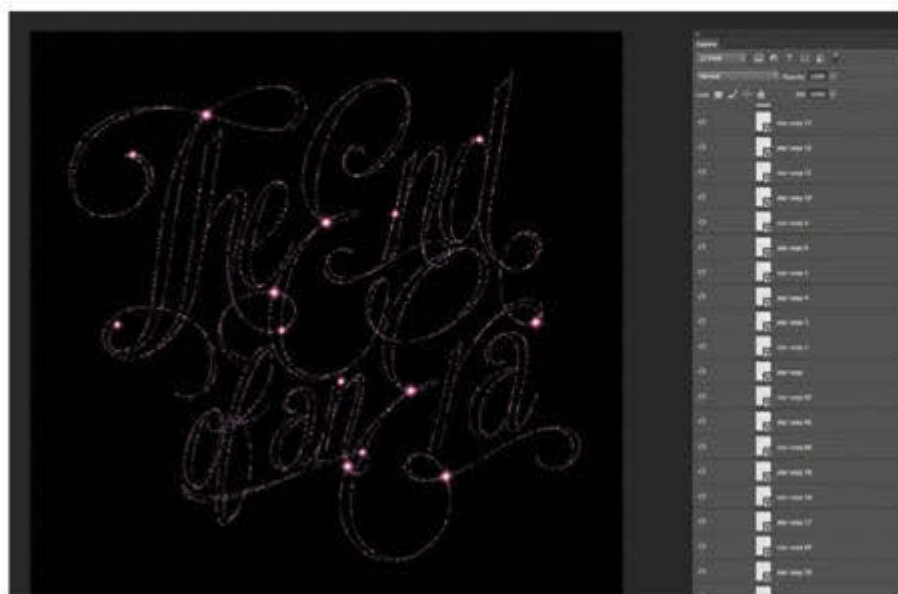
Progress 1: Apply a star brush



Progress 2: Add glow effects



Progress 3: Make a reflection

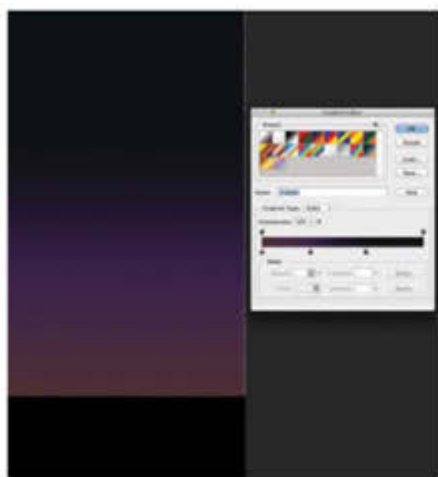


## 04 MAKE YOUR STARS GLOW

Copy your lettering to the clipboard and launch Photoshop. Create a new document and paste your artwork into your new workspace. With your lettering layer selected, check the Lock Transparent Pixels checkbox and Edit>Fill your layer with white. Next, go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set the Radius to 1 pixel. Duplicate this layer and then Edit>Fill the type on this layer with a deep magenta colour, followed by Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur, and set the Radius to 4 pixels.

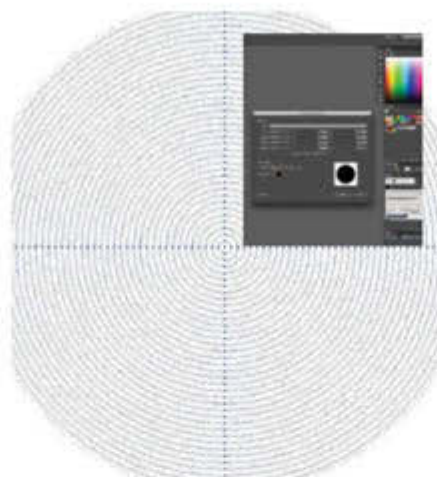
### QUICK TIP

With a small soft round brush, add some lighting across the mountain at random. On a new layer with a slightly larger brush, replicate lighting along the foreshore by clicking in random spots and different colours across the water's edge. Duplicate this layer and run a Motion Blur to enhance the effect.



## 06 CREATE THE SKY

Define the horizon line on your image and create a selection that spans from the horizon line to the top of your canvas. Apply a linear gradient that blends from a dark apricot through purple to a very dark blue. Create a new black layer and follow with Filter>Render>Lens Flare, selecting the 105mm Prime flare with 128% Brightness. Position the centre point of the flare to the bottom-right end of the preview window. Set the layer's blending mode to Screen and reduce the layer Opacity to 20%.



## 07 CREATE A SCATTERED STAR FIELD

Return to Illustrator and create a small circle 40mm in diameter. With the Transform tool, duplicate the circle 3800%. Using the Blend tool, blend between the small and large circle. In the Blend Options dialog box, set the Spacing to 35 Specified Steps. Next, separate the path by going to Object>Blend>Expand. Create a new scatter brush with Size set on Random from 10% to 49%, Spacing set on Random from 17% to 157% and Scatter set on Random from -140% to 486%.



## 05 CREATING FLARED STARS

Using the Rectangular Marquee tool, create a crosshair selection with each intersecting line 2 pixels wide and 80 pixels long. Using your Radial Gradient tool from white to transparent, create a gradient from the centre to the edge of the selection. On a new layer, create a radial gradient above this half way across the crosshair, forming a soft white circle. On a new layer, create another larger soft circle in pink and follow this process on a new layer one more time with a larger dark magenta circle.



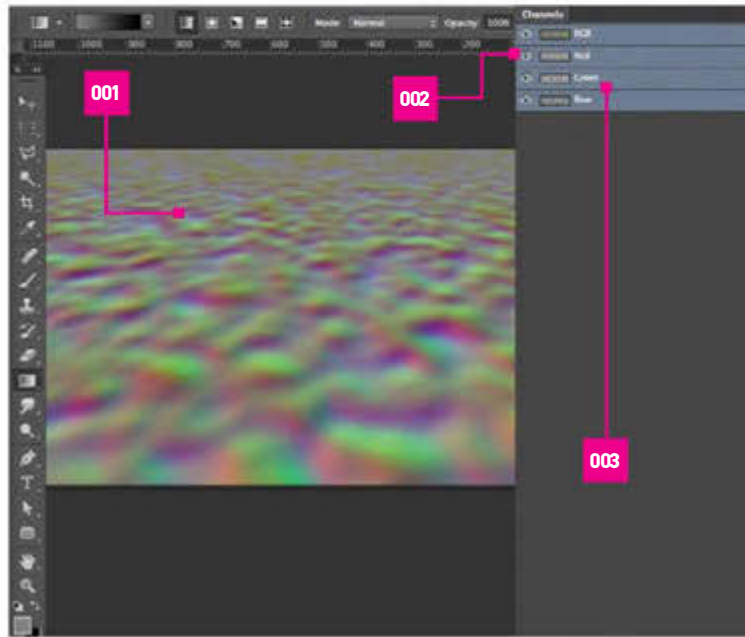
## 08 FINISH YOUR BACKGROUND

Paste the stars over the background in your Photoshop document and scale the stars so that there's coverage to all corners of the canvas. Fill with white and run a Gaussian Blur of 1 pixel over the stars. Set the Opacity of the star layer to 10%, duplicate this layer and place it on the layer above, setting the Opacity to 100% and the layer blending mode to Overlay.

## WATER TIME DISPLACING PIXELS

### 09 | DISPLACEMENT MAP CREATION

The first step to creating the illusion of reflecting rippled water is to create a displacement map. Displacement maps work by moving pixels based on the shades of grey contained within the Red and Green channels of a PSD image. The closer to white, the greater the adjustment. Create a new Photoshop document the same size as the water area of your image.



**001 | Apply a noise texture**  
Select Filter>Noise>Add Noise (Gaussian) at 400%. Follow this with a Gaussian Blur of 2px

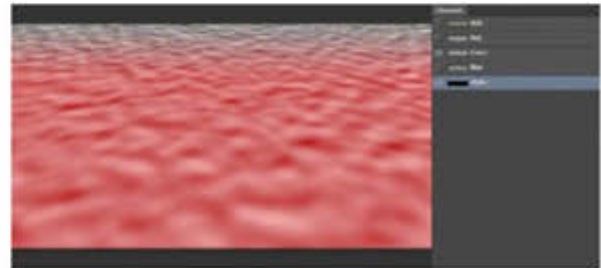
**002 | Red Channel**  
In the Red Channel, add an Emboss filter and set the Angle to 180°. Height to 1px and Amount to 500%

**002 | Green Channel**  
In the Green Channel, do as above but this time set the Angle to 90°. All other values are identical



### 10 | DISTORT THE DISPLACEMENT MAP

To help replicate the angle of the water and perspective of the image, you need to distort the displacement map so that the ripples at the bottom of the image are much larger than those at the top of the image. In the Layers palette, Edit>Transform>Perspective of the image and drag the bottom corners across until the perspective matches.



### 11 | QUICK MASK LINEAR FADING

Select the Red channel. Create a Quick Mask and draw a white to black linear gradient vertically across the image. Make a selection from the mask and fill with a medium grey. Go to the Green channel and repeat but add the gradient just at the tip of the image. Make a selection from this and fill with grey also.



### 12 | REFLECT YOUR IMAGE

Return to the original image and place all of the layers except for the bottom one in a layer group. Duplicate this new layer group followed by Merge Group so that you're left with a single layer that has all of the elements in the image flattened on that layer. Using the Transform tool, reflect the image vertically and align the base of the mountain range on the reflected image to the underside of the horizon and scale vertically to suit.



### 13 | APPLY YOUR DISPLACEMENT MAP

Make a rectangular selection of the water area and with a soft brush around 60 pixels in diameter, brush a dark purple haze along the shoreline of the water. With the selection still active, apply Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Set the Angle to 90° and the Distance to 70 pixels. Next, go to Filter>Distort>Displace and set the Horizontal Value to 50 and the vertical value to 100 using the new image you created as your displacement map. Select Stretch to Fit and Repeat Edge Pixels checked in the Displace settings.



### BASE YOUR SETTINGS ON THE SCENE

The settings and values are very much relative to the size of your document, so if you're using this as a guide for your own work please keep in mind that this is based on a document that is roughly A4 at 300dpi. If your size and resolution is higher than this, then many of these values will need to be too. Keep in mind also that for best results, the displacement map needs to be an appropriate size and resolution for your image. For this type of perspective-based distortion, the horizontal scale value should be roughly 50% of the vertical value.

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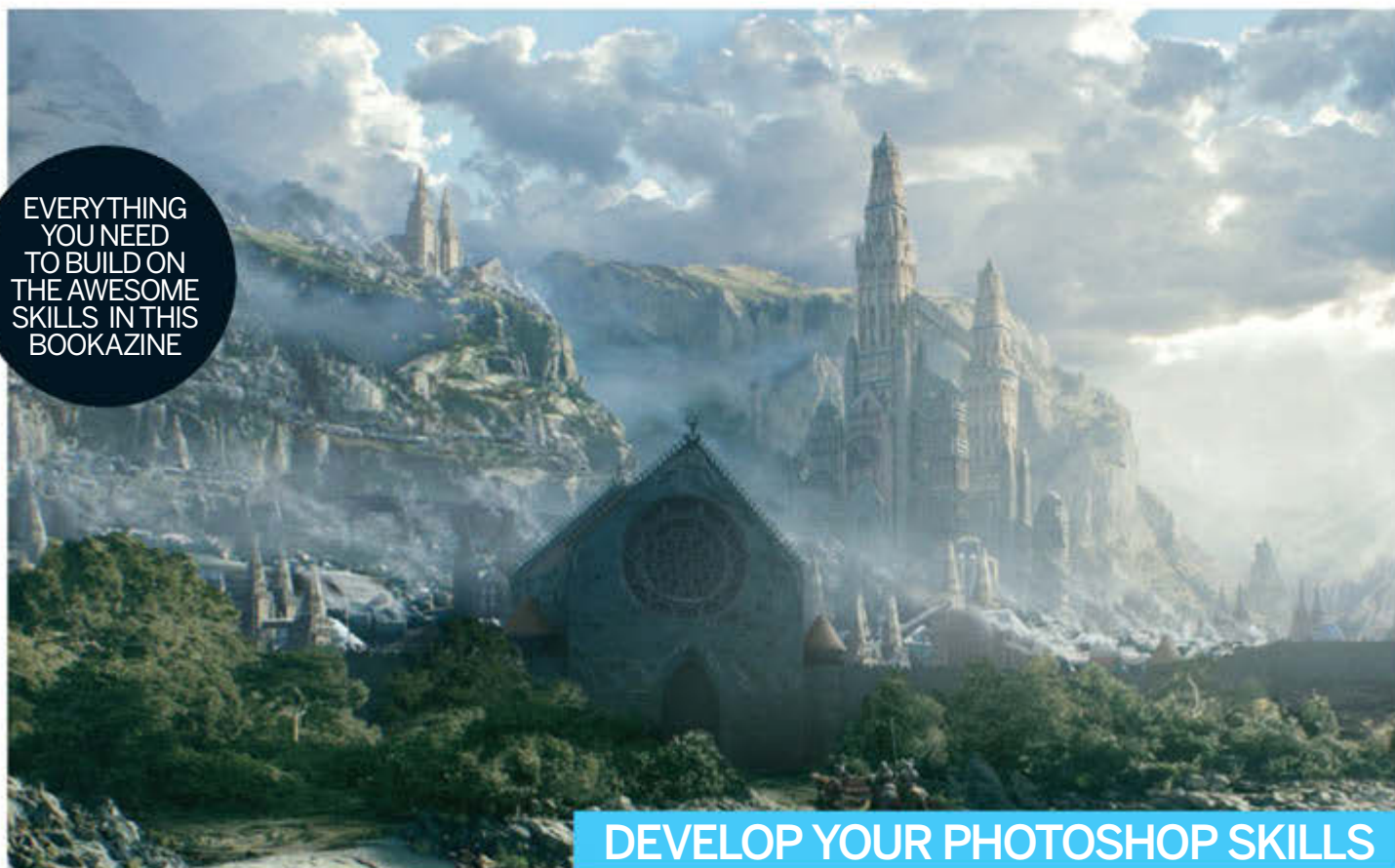
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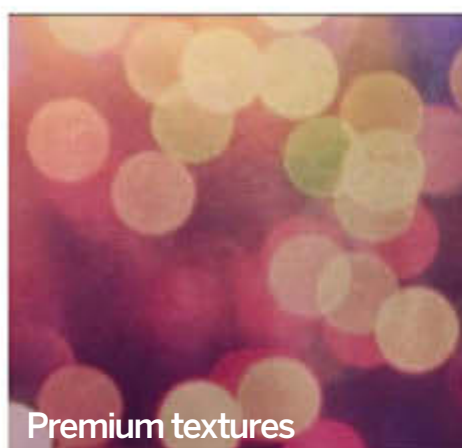
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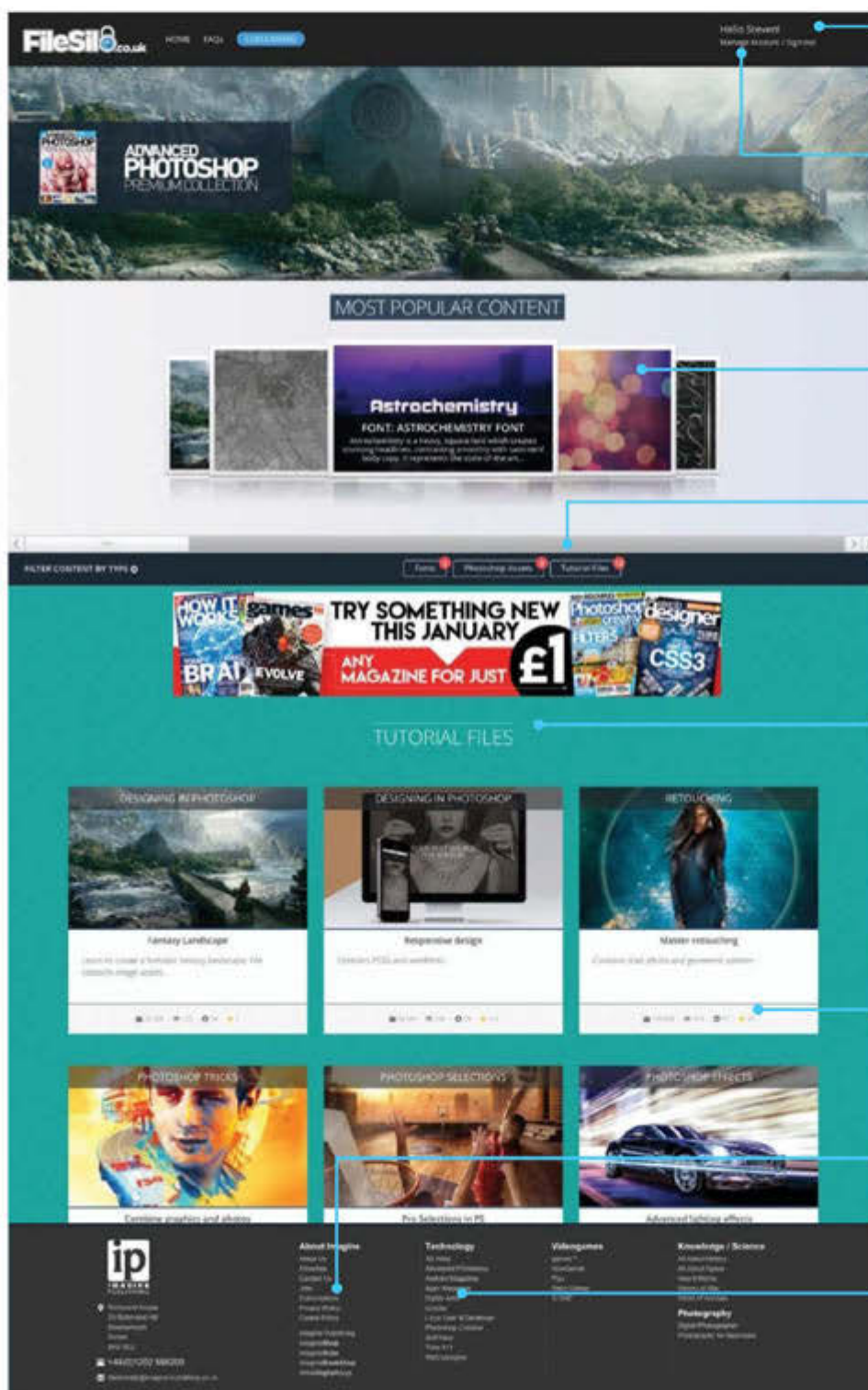
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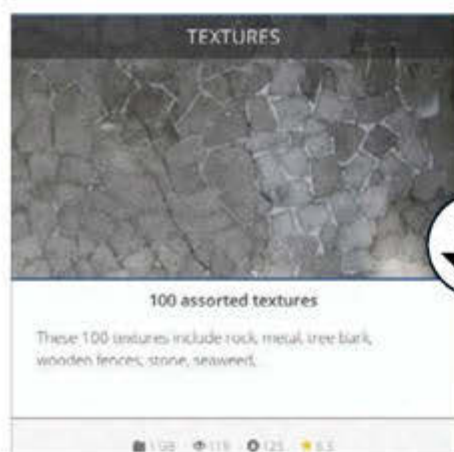
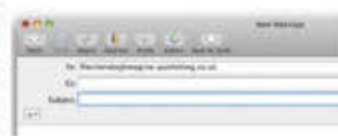
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